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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

'JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN: AN HONEST BIOGRAPHY'

Times : 'Shows narrative power, good taste, selection, and a real sense of style.'

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JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

AN HONEST BIOGRAPHY

By

ALEXANDER MACKINTOSH

"Of the simplest character to his sworn admirers or sworn enemies, one of the most complicated to those who are neither" (LORD ROSEBURY on a survey of Napoleon).

"Une comète qui est entrée dans l'auguste pléiade et chemine avec elle sans avoir rien perdu de ses attributs de comète" (M. BOURMY, in preface to Achille Viallate's book on Mr. Chamberlain).

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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NOTE

SCARCELY any person could trace the life of Mr. Chamberlain with equal sympathy for every portion of his varied career. The present writer, in describing the strange transformation of the Radical, the Liberationist, the Free Trader into the tariff advocate, the friend of Church schools and the colleague of Conservatives, admires at several stages, and dares to dissent at others ; he seeks to present a faithful account at all points. His qualification is that of an observer. From the Gallery of the House of Commons he watched Mr. Chamberlain for a quarter of a century, with never-failing, never-slackening interest. For the candour of his record he offers no apology. 'It is,' as Horace Walpole said of Chatham, 'a man I am describing, and one whose greatness will bear to have his blemishes fairly delivered to you—not from a love of censure, but of truth.'

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

ALTHOUGH on its first appearance in 1906 the fairness of this biography was recognized by most of the reviewers, certain critics on each side were displeased by its candour. To them there was no riddle in Mr. Chamberlain's life, no complexity, no mixture of motive; he was either saint or devil, a penitent who after sowing wild political acts reaped the harvest of a perfect patriotism, or a man of life-long selfish ambition who having failed in one course recklessly tried another. According to the extreme eulogists of Mr. Chamberlain the writer was stupid because he failed to detect in all his inconsistencies 'a self-development proceeding in harmony with a particular set of principles.' On the other hand, according to detractors, the narrative itself plainly showed that the Radical who became the champion of Conservatives was, as Mr. Goldwin Smith said, a political gambler, laying his stakes now on rouge, now on noir. It is, perhaps, a comfortable thing to be positive, and yet one is tempted to retort, with Cromwell, 'Brethren, believe that it is possible you may be mistaken.'

If proof of the balance maintained in the book were needed the writer might supply it by setting the one critic against the other. Those who seek a partial view of Mr. Chamberlain will find it in many volumes. The 'claim to continuity' is set forth, for instance, by Mr. H. C. Pedder in a study published in 1902. 'When we get' he says, 'a clear idea as to the meaning of Mr. Chamberlain's present Imperialism we soon discover that it rests primarily on the development of those democratic principles which he advocated at the beginning of his political career.' A similarly complacent idea was expressed by the 'Owd Poskitt' of Mr. J. S. Fletcher when he remarked that there was 'noä wobblin' and ramblin' about Joäziph' because Joäziph said in 1903 what he himself had been saying for years! The opposite view, held by men of the type of Mr. Henry Labouchere, has been put into pungent language by Mr. J. M. Robertson, who writes that after 1887 Mr. Chamberlain's back was turned on all good ideals. 'To the normal malice of Conservatism he brought the abnormal

malice of the renegade, and in so far as Conservatism adopted him it became visibly worse, substituting for the older temper of honest repugnance to change a new chicane of official strategy directed by no higher aim than the frustration of the aims of the other side.'

In an estimate of Mr. Chamberlain, much turns on consistency. It is true, as Lowell has remarked, that 'the foolish and the dead alone never change their opinion.' Such a dictum, however, is not a sufficient guide. The circumstances must be considered. 'Alteration of opinion,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'is not always to be blamed, but it is always to be watched with vigilance; always to be challenged and put upon its trial.' This was his own fate in the affair of Home Rule, and it was Sir Robert Peel's fate with regard to the corn duty. All political leaders change their opinions, but the present volume shows that the changes in Mr. Chamberlain's case were unusually numerous and violent, that they affected nearly every great secular subject discussed in his time, and that they occurred not only in the judgments of his youth, but in those of his mature and ripe manhood; he renounced, indeed, during the last two decades of his career, not merely his view of one great subject, but most of the beliefs which he had professed till the age of fifty. Yet the writer, instead of pronouncing a verdict upon his motives, submits the whole case to the jury. He tries to describe what Mr. Chamberlain said and did, and how he looked and spoke; to describe the scenes amid which he moved and the contemporaries among whom he mingled, and the impression which he produced upon Parliament and people.

But why 'honest,' asks a censor. 'What has "honest" to do with biography?' Let Queen Katharine answer—

After my death, I wish no other herald,
No other speaker of my living actions,
To keep mine honour from corruption,
But such an honest chronicler as Griffith.

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NOTABLE DATES

IN

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S LIFE

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Moves to Birmingham	1854
First Marriage	1861
Second Marriage	1868
Chairman, Executive : National Education League	1869
Enters Town Council	1869
Mayor and Chairman of School Board	1873
Candidate for Sheffield	1874
Retires from Business	1874
Elected for Birmingham	1876
Founds National Liberal Federation	1877
Member of Liberal Cabinet	1880
Unauthorized Radical Programme	1885
Opposes Home Rule Bill	1886
Ally of Conservative Ministers	1887
Third Marriage.	1888
Leader of Liberal Unionists in House of Commons	1892
Colonial Secretary in Unionist Government	1895
Boer War	1899
Advocates Tariff Reform and Resigns Office	1903
Illness	1906
Death	1914

I

ANCESTRY AND YOUTH

THREE men of political genius played a role as conspicuous as a Prime Minister's on the Parliamentary stage for a number of years after Mr. Gladstone's final overthrow of Lord Beaconsfield. Their talents gave to that stage extraordinary force and interest. Two of them passed away prematurely in the gloom of thwarted ambition, Mr. Parnell's public career being shattered by his private conduct and Lord Randolph Churchill learning the painful lesson that no man in this world is indispensable. Life gave a much longer and fuller trial to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who resembled the Irish leader and the Tory democrat in the possession of bold, disturbing qualities. Some of the other Parliamentarians who, in their day, filled great places are fading into shadows in the memory, but these three remain distinct and vivid among the figures that crossed Mr. Gladstone's later career, and the most picturesque as well as most tantalizing of the three is the subject of this biography.

In birth, education and environment Mr. Chamberlain differed from the class which was accustomed to govern Great Britain. The records of our statesmen, as a rule, have begun with the houses of ancient families, with the University, with hunting and shooting, with private secretaryships at home and visits to ambassadors abroad. It was in the tough world of business, in the local debating society, in municipal service that one of the ablest, most daring, politicians who ever convulsed or dominated the country received his equipment for the front bench and Whitehall. He entered the conspicuous arena not to pass the time, but to satisfy a lofty ambition, to let loose a strong will and, perchance, to leave the world a little better than he found it; and to understand the man who agitated Parliament for thirty years, and who after leaving one great party broke up the other, some knowledge is necessary of his youth and early labour. His crowded life was sharply divided into two stages, that of the manufacturer and town councillor, and that of the parliamentary and political leader, but although he abandoned the minor occupations when he assumed the greater, his training influenced his whole career. He

claimed to be and was regarded with pride as the business man in politics.

Although efforts have been made by others to trace a long pedigree for Mr. Chamberlain and to show that his ancestors were in business in London at the time of the Great Fire, he did not claim descent from an ancient aristocracy. He boasted of

No urns, no dusty monuments,
No broken images of ancestors.

It is from Daniel Chamberlain, malster of Lacock, in Wiltshire, who died in 1760, that the male lineage of the family is clearly proved. Daniel's son, William, the great-grandfather of the man who raised the name to celebrity, moved to London, and he and his descendents carried on business in the City as wholesale boot and shoe merchants. At the time of the statesman's birth—although subsequently they took additional premises in Wood Street—the family warehouse was where it had been for a century, in Milk Street, Cheapside. 'I was,' said Mr. Chamberlain, 'the fourth generation of cordwainers, who had practised their occupation in the same house and under the same name for 120 years.' The older members lived over the warehouse. It is recorded under the date October 5, 1769, in the vestry book of St. Lawrence, Jewry, that 'Mr. Chamberlain attended and proposed to give the rent of £42 for 21 years for the house he now lives in, situated in Milk Street, clear of all taxes, and to lay out the sum of £183 10s. 3d. Ordered accordingly.' The lease was renewed in 1790 to William and Joseph Chamberlain, and at subsequent periods, although at increased rents, to the successive generations, the sum fixed finally in 1853 being £140. Bloomfield, the poet, author of 'The Farmer's Boy,' worked as a journeyman for the first Joseph, who died in 1837.

With the Cordwainers Company the family have been associated since they came from Wiltshire. Mr. Chamberlain mentioned with the pride of a business race that his great-grandfather, his great-uncle, his grandfather, his father and his uncle were all in turn Masters of the guild. He himself joined it at the age of twenty-one; four brothers followed, and his son Austen was admitted in due time. 'My family,' he said in the House of Commons, 'can boast nothing of distinguished birth and they have not inherited wealth or anything of that kind. But we have a record—an unbroken record—of nearly two centuries, of unstained commercial integrity and honour.' The respect in which they were held is indicated by the fact that, although Unitarians, several of them were chosen churchwardens in their parish.

Not only was Mr. Chamberlain proud of the commercial record of his family, but he was proud also of his inheritance as a dissenter. Through his father's mother, he was descended, as he boasted to

Welsh Nonconformists, from one of the 'ejected ministers who in the time of the Stuarts left home and work and profit rather than accept the State-made creed which it was sought to force upon them.' This was Richard Baxter's friend, Richard Serjeant, of Kidderminster, who refused to take the tests imposed by the Act of Uniformity in 1662.¹ Serjeant's eldest daughter, Sarah, married Francis Witton, of The Lye, near Stourbridge, and had fifteen children; and among her descendants are the Chamberlains and Nettlefolds. The statesman's grandfather was married to two sisters, Sarah Serjeant's great-granddaughters, and his father was one of the offspring of the second wife.

From his father, who, like his grandfather, was named Joseph, he inherited certain notable qualities and interests. Portraits of the father reveal a firm mouth in a rather precise face; and although he was of retiring habits, he was, according to an obituary notice, keenly interested in political, charitable and educational movements. A memorial tablet in Unity Church, Islington, bears witness that he was for more than fifty years 'a consistent worshipper' there and in Carter Lane Chapel, and a generous supporter of their institutions. Mr. Chamberlain's mother, who 'thought much about duty,' was Caroline Harben, daughter of a provision merchant, and aunt of Sir Henry Harben, who at the age of eighty-two became chairman of the Prudential Assurance Company. Thus on both sides a future favourite of the landed aristocracy sprang from people in trade.

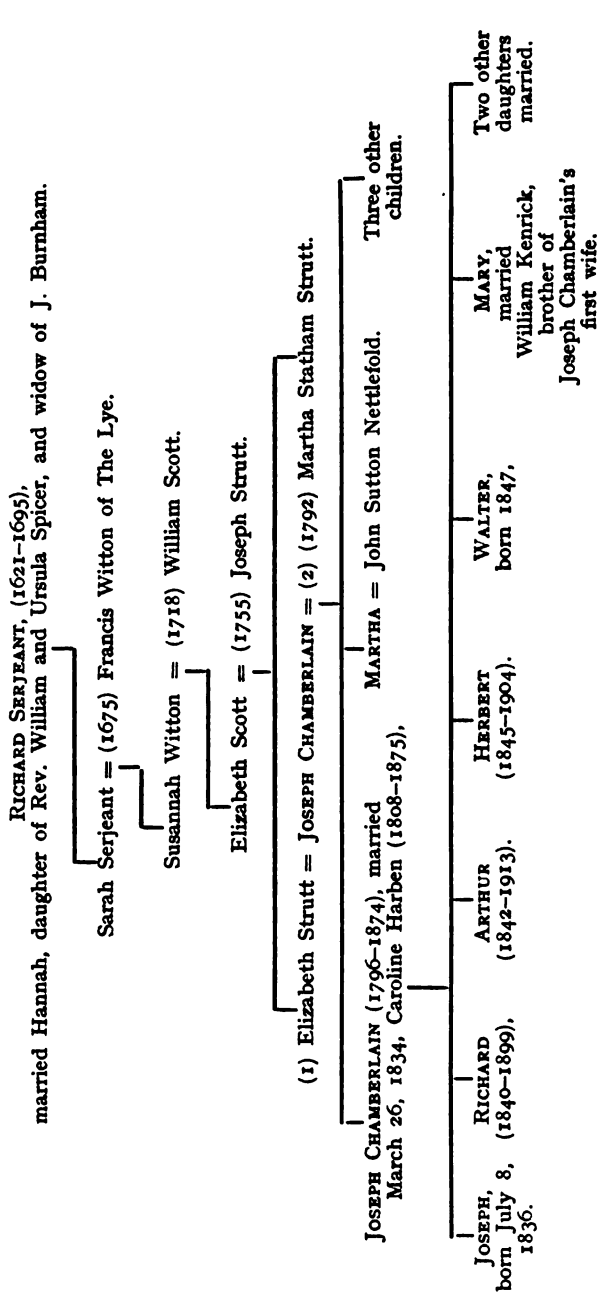
Joseph, the statesman, was the eldest of nine children. Four out of his five brothers, and his three sisters lived to see him famous. The only brother who entered Parliament was Richard. He was in business as a brass-founder in Birmingham, and was twice mayor of the town, but it was as member for West Islington that at a transition period in Joseph's career he sat in the House of Commons. Arthur Chamberlain was conspicuous as a licensing reformer and an opponent of the tariff reform propaganda, but Herbert and Walter were never prominently concerned in politics.

Sprung from a race of merchants and political dissenters, the future autocrat of Birmingham was born a Londoner, and from the point of view of smart society his existence began on the wrong side of the Thames. A middle-class southern suburb, and not Mayfair nor Belgravia, was the place of his birth. 'I never know'd a respectable coachman,' said the elder Mr. Weller, 'as wrote poetry, 'cept one

¹ Mr. Chamberlain's expression of pride induced the descendants of Richard Serjeant to subscribe for a mural tablet of brass which was placed in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London. When Serjeant was ousted from the vicarage of Stone, two miles from Kidderminster, which had been formerly held by his father-in-law, the living went to his brother-in-law, William Spicer, and he retired to a small estate which he had bought. He had, as his biographer Mr. Thomas Gill records, an adequate income.

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

DESCENT OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN FROM RICHARD SERJEANT, AN EJECTED MINISTER.



as made an affectin' copy o' verses the night afore he was hung for a highway robbery ; and *he* was only a Cambervell man, so even that's no rule.' Like Browning, who saved the poetic reputation of the sombre suburb, Mr. Chamberlain was only a Camberwell man. Disdain for it ought to be dispelled by such celebrated names !

On July 8, 1836, sixteen months before the death of his grandfather, Joseph was born at No. 3, Grove Hill Terrace, now 188, The Grove, Camberwell, a three-storeyed, semi-detached house. At the age of eight he was sent to a preparatory school at Crescent Place in the immediate neighbourhood, kept by the Misses Pace. He was, according to Miss Jane Stoddart's account of his early years, a shy, reserved boy, but he liked to have his own way, and the child was father of the man in respect that he was fond of taking those who submitted to him under his protection. He remained for only a few terms at the Camberwell school, but he never forgot it ; he visited the scene in the days of his fame, and sent fruit and flowers to his old mistresses.¹ In 1845 the Chamberlains moved to 25, Highbury Place, Islington, a district much favoured by the well-to-do City merchants. The Highbury Place of that period was extolled by the local historian on account of its beautiful view and healthy situation, and here the elder Chamberlains lived for many years. Joseph attended, as a day pupil, the school conducted at 36, Canonbury Square, by the Rev. Arthur Johnson, a clergyman of the Church of England who was an excellent classical scholar. And when the young boy was learning his lessons Sir Robert Peel was carrying the free trade policy which he himself was to attack nearly sixty years later. At the age of fourteen he was sent to University College School which he attended during the sessions 1850-1 and 1851-2. He did well in Latin and French and still better in mathematics. It was recalled in later years at a dinner of Old Boys that he showed a remarkable all-round capacity. He did not, however, join in the school sports. Not even in youth did he care much for physical recreation. One of his contemporaries, Mr. J. W. Mellor, who became Chairman of Committee of the House of Commons, remembered him as 'a very quiet and good little boy.' This was not the character in which he appeared to Mr. Mellor during the Home Rule struggle of 1893. Then the Chairman found him a mischievous big boy who kept the school of St. Stephen's in a state of excitement.

Destined for a commercial career, Joseph Chamberlain was at the early age of sixteen taken into his father's business. He was initiated into the mysteries both of the workshop and of the counting

¹ The school accounts kept by the Misses Pace with the entries of the payments by Mr. Chamberlain's parents have been presented to the Camberwell Central Library.

house, and, as he mentioned in much later life, he learned in a practical way the art of shoemaking. One who took in goods to the firm says he 'frequently saw the tall old gentleman (the father), with a slight book-keeper's stoop, go in and out of his sanctum, and Joseph, as a young man, do the same—the exact counterpart of the sire, minus the slight stoop.' One of his own earliest city recollections was dining with his father in the Cordwainers Hall, on which occasion, as he believed, he uttered his first public speech. Probably he saw the funeral of the Duke of Wellington and heard 'the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation' as the warrior was laid to rest. But, fortunately, when he thought of the soldier's profession, he could not have foreseen that he himself would be responsible, as a statesman, for the greatest war of the reign which was then so full of promise.

Half a century later he recalled that as a boy he was an omnivorous reader and that everything came well to him. The books he mentioned did not reveal any individual taste. They were discussed in his day by everybody just as in Dr. Primrose's time the fashionable topics were pictures, taste, Shakespeare and the musical glasses. Mr. Chamberlain recalled with gratitude the essays and English history of Macaulay, the poems of Tennyson, and the novels of Dickens and Thackeray. Only the first two volumes of Macaulay's History had been published when he left London; *The Pickwick Papers* came out while he was in his cradle; *In Memoriam* appeared anonymously in 1850; *Esmond* was finished about the time that he entered business. He sought self-improvement not only by reading but also by attending scientific and other lectures at the Polytechnic; and it is evident that he was diligent from youth. Probably no man in the course of a long life wasted less time.

His readiness to help and influence others was revealed while he was learning his father's business. He taught in the Sunday School connected with Carter Lane Chapel, and in those days before compulsory education had been established religious teaching of the young on Sundays was accompanied by some secular instruction. During the greater part of Mr. Chamberlain's youth the pastor at Carter Lane was Dr. Joseph Hutton, father of the virile editor of the *Spectator*. Rarely does any place of worship produce in a single generation two such men as Joseph Chamberlain and Richard Holt Hutton, a statesman and a journalist unsurpassed in their time for force of character. The congregation to which they belonged in their early days removed in 1862 to Highbury and opened Unity Church in Upper Street. Here are two painted windows to the memory of Mr. Chamberlain's grandparents besides the tablet (already referred to) in affectionate remembrance of his father.

II

LIFE IN BIRMINGHAM

IF Mr. Chamberlain had continued to live within sound of Bow Bells what would have been his history? No feature of his life is more easily traced than the influence upon it of Birmingham—the influence of its municipal experience and keen local interests, of its social reformers, its religious leaders and its politicians. If he had remained in London he would have risen to be Lord Mayor and to ride in the great gilt coach; he would have entertained Princes and Prime Ministers and been knighted Sir Joseph. But would he have entered Parliament as a militant Radical? Would he have shaken himself sufficiently free from Cockney habits and engagements to pursue a strenuous political career? And would he have found a constituency which remained faithful and admiring through many changes and vicissitudes?

At eighteen years of age (1854) Joseph Chamberlain left London. His father was induced by Mr. Nettlefold, who had married his sister, to put capital into the manufacture of wooden screws in order to develop an important American patent for self-acting machinery which the family acquired, and the youth went to Birmingham to take up the new enterprise along with a cousin, Joseph Nettlefold. From that period he threw in his lot with the pushing people of a district with which he was already to some extent connected by his descent from the Serjeants. For about twelve years Joseph Chamberlain lived the ordinary life of a private citizen, devoting himself to his business. At first he sat at a desk with another clerk, posting the ledger and doing other routine work, but after a time he shared a room with Mr. Nettlefold. In the course of his early years he acted occasionally as a traveller, opening up a business connexion, for instance, in Ireland. Joseph Chamberlain took control of the commercial department of the firm in which he became a principal and was soon its moving spirit, those connected with it testifying in after years that it owed very much to his capacity and energy. For a considerable period Nettlefold and Chamberlain had to contend with great difficulties. There was over-competition, with a declining trade. By boldness and resource, however, the firm gradually secured success.

Service for the benefit of others, such as he began in London, was continued by Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham. The young man of business found time to act as a teacher at the New Meeting House of the Unitarians, and subsequently in the Church of the Messiah. He taught history at the night school, doubting, perhaps, whether he would give the best of it to Whigs or to Tories; and frequently in his Sunday lessons he discoursed on geography, on botany, and on animals and birds. One of his pupils testified in old age that 'he taught me to read and write, and his kindly and gentle disposition will never be forgotten by me. I was unfortunate in my early days and as a poor boy came under his tuition, which enabled me to think and act for myself.' Another pupil recalled that on giving him *Pickwick Papers* as a prize Mr. Chamberlain said, 'This will stand reading more than once.' He shared also in the Penny Readings which were popular in those days and was President of a Mutual Improvement Society.

His life was not devoid of lighter pleasures. There was a time, according to his own confession, when he looked upon dancing 'as being one of the highest enjoyments of which mortal man is capable,' and at that period he would have 'sacrificed the finest political speech ever delivered in order to escape' to its delights. Frequently he took part in amateur theatrical performances, one of his favourite and successful characters being that of Puff in Sheridan's play, *The Critic*, and he wrote a one-act farce, *Who's Who*, superintending its production at a friend's house and himself playing one of the roles. Neither plays nor dancing, however, distracted his mind from graver occupations. He was not

A clerk foredoom'd his father's soul to cross,
Who pens a stanza when he should engross.

Business was never neglected by Joseph Chamberlain, junior.

One of the greatest debaters who ever addressed the House of Commons acquired early practice, not at a University Union, but in a provincial club. He joined the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society soon after he settled in the Midlands. Not knowing himself, he imagined he would never open his mouth. Silence was impossible in such a nature. Even on the first night he was constrained to defend the memory of Oliver Cromwell, which has continued for two centuries and a half to excite hot passions in young and old. The Society held its meetings for some time at the Hen and Chickens' Hotel in New Street, but in 1859 it removed to the Midland Institute. Joseph Chamberlain became a most assiduous member. A contemporary has recalled how with eye-glass on eye he smiled with amused complacency at an assailant, and an early friend who became a political opponent has stated that he showed 'perfect effron-

tery.' On one occasion the young man came to a dead stop in a speech, whereupon he calmly put his hand into his coat-tail pocket, pulled out his MS., looked at it, and went on again. Here was a fine case of effrontery! 'It shows you,' says the political opponent, 'the character of the man.' Another contemporary mentions that 'there was always promptness and all-there-ness in his nature with a decided touch of self-reliance, and I may even say, audacity.'

His first vote of censure was given in 1858, when he denounced the speeches in which John Bright, one of the members for Birmingham, had been expounding pacific views of foreign policy. In a lively strain the budding Jingo charged the famous orator with several inaccuracies. On another occasion he maintained that so far from the aristocracy being responsible for all our wars, as Mr. Bright had asserted, every war since 1688 had been demanded by the people. At the election of 1859, as Mr. G. M. Trevelyan records in his biography of Mr. Bright, 'a young Radical named Joseph Chamberlain was canvassing for Acland in opposition to the "Quaker's" views on foreign policy.' In the debating society he showed the same tendency in April, 1860, when he was in the bold minority which contended: 'That it is the policy and duty of England to assist, even if necessary by arms, the efforts of Switzerland to prevent the annexation of Savoy to France.' The debaters, as he recalled years afterwards, 'surveyed mankind from China to Peru'; they declared war without the slightest regard to the Concert of Europe, and dismissed Ministries without consulting the House of Commons. With equal confidence they pronounced on literary questions. In January, 1861, Mr. Chamberlain took the aye side in controversy on the proposition: 'That the works of the English novelists since the days of Scott are superior to those of their predecessors.' He rose to be president of the Society, and in this capacity delivered an address in October, 1863, on 'Difference of Opinion.' Although usually insisting that his own opinion was right, he learned in those early debates to expect difference. The Society formed an important factor in his training, and no doubt by his own pugnacity he stimulated the faculties of others. Soon after his first marriage, however, he ceased to take a frequent part in the proceedings.

The web of our life is of mingled yarn, and Mr. Chamberlain shared the common lot with its mixture of weal and woe. In his domestic experience he had much sorrow as well as great happiness. He was married three times, his first and second wives living only brief periods after their union. In 1861, seven years after he went to Birmingham, the young screw-maker was married at the New Meeting House to Harriet Kenrick (who was the same age as himself), the daughter of Archibald Kenrick, hollow-ware manufacturer and borough magistrate, and the sister of William Kenrick who subsequently became the

husband of Mr. Chamberlain's own sister, Mary, and was mayor of Birmingham and one of its representatives in Parliament. Mrs. Chamberlain died in 1863 at the birth of her second child, Austen. For a time the family dwelt at Berrow Court, Edgbaston, the home of the father-in-law, where an aunt attended to the motherless children.

In 1868 Mr. Chamberlain, then entering public life, was married at the Church of the Messiah to Florence, the daughter of Timothy Kenrick, of Maple Bank. His second wife was a cousin of his first, but was much younger, being only twenty years of age at her wedding. By her he had three daughters and two sons, one of whom died in infancy. He lived at Southbourne, a large house at 35, Augustus Road, Edgbaston, till 1880, when he moved to Highbury, Moor-Green, a residence which became as familiar as Hatfield or Hawarden. Before he went there he suffered another severe blow by the loss of his second wife, her death occurring in 1875, while he was ruling Birmingham and aspiring to a seat in Parliament. His third marriage belongs to a quite different stage of his career—the stage in which he glittered as a political leader and fought with Gladstone and prevailed.

Mr. Chamberlain's business life in Birmingham occupied twenty years. In that short span he acquired what men of moderate means call a fortune. Nettlefold & Chamberlain secured new markets, built up a great industry, and purchased several competing concerns, which they amalgamated with their own, their business being expanded until it became one of the most important in the Midlands. It was alleged in after years that Mr. Chamberlain secured a monopoly of the screw trade by the merciless crushing out of the smaller manufacturers, but imputations on his conduct were attributed to political spite. The Rev. R. M. Grier, vicar of Rugeley, who made careful inquiries, testified in the *Daily News* that Mr. Chamberlain's firm 'had always stood high amongst the people, and more especially the working men of Birmingham, for honesty and straightforward dealing, and all that could be said against it was that other firms had suffered indirectly through its success.' More precise testimony was given by Messrs. A. Stokes & Co. As a representative firm in the screw trade they wrote on November 25, 1884: 'We unhesitatingly affirm that Mr. Chamberlain's actions were highly beneficial to those connected with the trade and beneficial to those whose businesses were purchased on such liberal terms: also to those who, like ourselves, remained in the trade as well as to his own firm.' His father, spending in Birmingham the latter years of a long life, saw and shared the prosperity of the business to which he had sent the youth from London, and in 1874, soon after his death, Joseph and a brother, Herbert, were able to retire.

The social interests of the workmen employed by the firm were not neglected by Mr. Chamberlain. He ascertained their thoughts and ideas when he met them at their own debating club, and an example of his efforts for them is given in an incident which has been recorded. Mr. Solly, who had been pastor at Carter Lane, was interesting himself in the formation of clubs for working men in the great centres of population. Mr. Chamberlain called on him and said he was desirous of establishing a club at Small Heath for the benefit of his workmen and would be glad if Mr. Solly could come and help him to start it. 'This, of course, I willingly did,' said that gentleman; 'spoke to a good meeting, saw the capital club-house he had built, had most hospitable entertainment at his house in Edgbaston.' During Mr. Chamberlain's first Parliamentary contest he was charged with being a harsh employer, but his workpeople testified to his character and to the good relations existing between them, and he was supported in his candidature by a deputation of Trade Unionists as well as by the President of the Trades Council. On retiring from business he was presented by the employés of the firm with a silver salver 'in recognition of the uniform kindness and liberality which had distinguished him,' and in his acknowledgment he remarked that although some little differences had arisen these had been partial and temporary, and practically nothing had occurred during his connexion with them to interrupt their good relations. At the close of that connexion he treated the whole of the workpeople and their families to an excursion to the Crystal Palace.

'Oh, that's Chamberlain, he looks a swell, doesn't he!' ejaculated some one at a meeting held in the Town Hall to protest against a railway project in the 'sixties, when he was known only to a comparatively limited circle. An observer described him as 'a very well-dressed gentleman. He wore a very long and capacious but smartly-cut drab overcoat, and sported a red tie. Placing a single eye-glass, after the manner of a watchmaker, in his eye, he keenly surveyed the assembly.' In those days he wore side whiskers, low down on the cheek, although in later years his whole face was shaved. When he offered £5 towards the expenses at the meeting the mayor seemed not quite sure who he was till his name was mentioned, and then came the ejaculation quoted above.

Another interesting glimpse of him about the same period is given by Judge Condé Williams, who was engaged on the local Conservative paper. 'My youthful attention,' says Mr. Williams, 'was often struck by the statuesque form of a young man, standing nose in the air, as if defying all comers, on the kerbstone nearly at the bottom of Bennetts Hill, where was situated a club at that period. He was pointed out to me as a Radical-Republican champion, the rising hope of the modern

Unitarian party of Birmingham.'¹ Mr. Williams was attracted by his eyeglass, wondering how he kept it in his place, and still more by his winter coat, which reached to his boots and was made of some fur material. His seal-skin overcoat in later years, as a contemporary has recorded, caused the people at his meetings to gasp.

Between 1867 and 1870 the manufacturer, whose business success was assured, began to figure as a municipal, educational and political reformer. In 1868, when Mr. Gladstone formed his first Government with Lord Hartington, as one of its members, two other men whose careers crossed Mr Chamberlain's—Mr. Vernon Harcourt and Mr. Henry Campbell (known to fame as Sir William Harcourt and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman) entered the House of Commons. Mr. Morley had published his first book on Edmund Burke and had begun to edit the *Fortnightly Review*, but Mr. Arthur Balfour was still at Cambridge, ignorant of the man with the pale, young-looking face, and with eyeglass adjusted 'after the manner of a watchmaker' whose ambition was soaring high and who was attracting the attention of the people of Birmingham. At the election of the first 'household Parliament' in 1868 Mr. Chamberlain became known in local political circles, and in November, 1869, he was chosen a member of the Town Council. The committee which promoted his candidature recommended him as 'a large ratepayer, a man of thorough business habits, enlarged views and marked ability, belonging indeed to precisely the class of burgesses most desirable on the Council.'

A new civic spirit was at this period awakened in Birmingham. 'Men made the discovery that perhaps a strong and able Town Council might do almost as much to improve the conditions of life in the town as Parliament itself.' The flame of reform was lit by a remarkable group of Nonconformist ministers, with whom Mr. Chamberlain was associated in several movements, by Dr. Dale and Dr. Crosskey, by Charles Vince, the Baptist, and George Dawson, 'the prophet,' as Judge Williams writes, 'of a nondescript Nonconformist party of advanced thinkers who crowded his Church of the Saviour.' For upwards of thirty years Dawson was the most prominent preacher in Birmingham and one of its most active and energetic citizens. To him more than to any other man, Dr. Dale attributed the creation of the new municipal spirit. Dale himself, who in the year that the future statesman went to Birmingham, was settled as co-pastor with the Rev. J. Angell James at Carr's Lane Congregational Church, became one of his most intimate and most loyal friends, and late in life he wistfully recalled 'Joseph Chamberlain in his fresh and brilliant promise,' and the time when he used to have a talk with him and his friends twice or thrice a week. It is recorded also that Dr. Crosskey, whose words Mr.

¹ *From Journalist to Judge*, by F. Condé Williams.

Chamberlain heard at the Church of the Messiah, pleaded with pathetic earnestness and with passion for the new municipal policy.

While Dawson was the prophet of this movement, Dr. Dale in some notes in Mr. Armstrong's *Life of Dr. Crosskey* remarks that he had not the kind of faculty necessary for putting his generous faith into practice. 'This was largely done by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who . . . began to show proof of those great powers which have since been recognized by the nation.' The fine spirit of the reformers is revealed even in the generosity with which they recognized the work of each other. Mr. Chamberlain himself said he was only one of a band of men who had laboured to make Birmingham better and healthier ; he had striven to bring to the homes of its vast population greater comfort, to bring to its children a better education, to give to its citizens more facilities for innocent recreation, and above all to maintain and keep alive that spirit of freedom and independence for which the town had been long and justly distinguished. A great ideal, worthily realized !

A record of the statesman's share in the municipal movement has been left by Dr. Dale. Mr. Chamberlain, as he testifies, 'gave himself to the work with a contagious enthusiasm. He did not merely enter the Council, give a large amount of time and strength to its committees, make striking and eloquent speeches on the new municipal policy ; he used his social influence to add strength to the movement. He appealed in private to men of ability who cared nothing for public life, and he showed how much they might do for the town if they would go into the Council ; he insisted that what they were able to do, it was their duty to do. He dreamt dreams and saw visions of what Birmingham might become, and resolved that he, for his part, would do his utmost to fulfil them.'

Chiefly at his instigation the Liberal Association of Birmingham, powerful in national politics, decided to interpose in municipal elections and a series of contests led to a Liberal majority on the Council and Mr. Chamberlain's election as mayor. Many reformers objected to the intrusion of party politics into local affairs, but Dr. Crosskey made the remarkable assertion that to the adoption of the Liberal policy was due almost all that was most valuable in the institutions and public life of modern Birmingham. 'It meant,' he said, 'the enjoyment by the great mass of the people of the blessing of a beautiful and civilized life.' At the same time he added his testimony to 'the power and administrative genius (I do not think a less word can be used) of J. Chamberlain.' The politician himself at a later stage of his career in defending this part of his work argued that the permanent distinction between Liberal and Conservative affects our judgment and conduct,

whether we are considering the removal of nuisances or the disestablishment and disendowment of the English Church.

After being only four years on the Council, Mr. Chamberlain was, in November, 1873, chosen mayor, and in the two following Novembers he was re-elected. Thus, although he did not join in the public work of the town at a very early age, his promotion was rapid. Meantime, as we shall soon see, he was not only playing a great municipal rôle, but was taking a lead in other affairs of even wider interest. Under Mayor Chamberlain, as his political opponents admit, Birmingham became one of the best-governed towns in the world. He declared, after long experience of statesmanship, that although he had had 'on the whole a tolerably active life,' he never laboured so hard or so continuously as during the three years in which he had the honour to be its civic head. The result of his labours is set forth in Mr. Bunce's *History of the Corporation*. 'The powerful aid of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain,' writes the local historian, 'and those who were glad to acknowledge him as their leader, . . . contributed to develop a new phase of municipal government. The quality of the Council continued steadily and rapidly to improve: a higher standard of public duty was established, capable citizens recognized the obligation of taking part in the government of the town and a series of important enterprises was entered upon, under the brilliant administration of Mr. Chamberlain, resulting in the acquisition of the gas and water works, the development of the health department, and the institution of the improvement scheme.'

One of the earliest occasions on which *Punch* took notice of a man who provided the subject for many caricatures was in 1874, when he dined with the Lord Mayor of London at the Mansion House on Derby Day. The Mayor of Birmingham said in a semi-humorous vein at the banquet that 'in late years the taunts against corporate bodies had been less frequent, and even their facetious friend, Mr. *Punch*, had indulged himself less often at their expense.' The facetious friend replied in some verses, one of which ran thus—

The artful Mayor of Birmingham
May butter *Punch*, but *Punch* can say
There never yet was epigram
Of his thrown e'en on Mayors away.

Attacks on the Liberal rulers of Birmingham were made by another journalistic observer. The *Times* in an article in 1875 denounced the shallow and barren political ideas of the Corporation, referred scornfully to the party organization, which strangled all efforts of political development at Birmingham that were not agreeable to the feelings of the majority, and said it was difficult to picture a tyranny more odious or more calculated to destroy the impulses of healthy life within the

municipality it oppressed. On the day after this attack a letter, protesting against some of the statements made by the great journal, was published, from 'J. Chamberlain, Mayor of Birmingham.' 'There is,' he wrote, 'no town in the kingdom in which political, educational, religious and municipal work is more active or more fruitful, and there is no council in England which contains a larger proportion of leading citizens or can point to greater practical results tending to the improvement of the town and the happiness and comfort of all classes of the people.'

Power in a man of active, ardent, ambitious temperament leads naturally to a sort of despotism. The despotism may be beneficent, but those whom it thwarts are inclined to resent it; and in his days of civic rule Mr. Chamberlain excited rancour by what has been described as his 'application of caustic and stinging (and sometimes rather vulgar) epithets.' A local cartoon depicted him saying to the crowd: 'Now, me lads, let us be equal, and I will be your king,' and when he accepted the civic chair an opponent taunted him with being 'not only mayor but Town Council too.' It was his habit then as it was in after years—a healthy habit, as a rule—to magnify his office. Even his friend, Mr. George Dixon, remarked with some soreness in 1878: 'It seems as if the terms Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Birmingham were become synonymous.' His local experience, however, proved that a public man is not without honour in his own district. Honour was promptly shown by Birmingham to its civic reformer. The memorial fountain, paid for by public subscription and inaugurated in 1880, proclaims 'gratitude for public services given to this town by Joseph Chamberlain.' He was honoured too by having his example followed by capable citizens elsewhere. He dignified the cause of gas and water.

III

RADICAL DISSENTERS

IN the revolt of the Dissenters against the Education Bill of 1870 Mr. Chamberlain first became known beyond the Midlands, his earliest reputation being that of an incisive critic of Liberal leaders and Liberal legislation. Soon after entering the Town Council of Birmingham the able and aspiring young man dared to raise his voice on public platforms in censure of Mr. Gladstone himself, and opened the struggle with William Edward Forster which in a later decade and on another stage had a dramatic development. His descent and training, his feelings and surroundings fitted him for the rôle that he undertook. He was by tradition and instinct a Dissenter; his awakening interest in public affairs led him to attach high value to the question of the schools; and he was influenced also by the noble band of Nonconformist ministers in the Midland capital.

By the foundation of the National Education League which sprang out of the Birmingham Education Society in October, 1869, that town became the headquarters of Radical Nonconformity at a crisis in its policy and history. Mr. Chamberlain, who had been among the founders of the local Society, was associated with Mr. George Dixon and Mr. Jesse Collings in the formation of the celebrated League; he was elected chairman of the Executive Committee and gave £1,000 to the funds. The object of the promoters was to secure a national system of education, provided through local authorities, rate supported, unsectarian, compulsory, free. This programme was regarded in many quarters as revolutionary and impracticable, and indeed more than one generation passed without its being carried out. Compulsion was secured soon after the League was founded, and fees were dispensed with about twenty years later, but for many Parliaments the absence of a complete national system continued to be deplored and a Government of which Mr. Chamberlain was a member repudiated the principle for which he waged war on Mr. Forster. The League, however, at its initiation was full of ardour, hope and energy and it quickly obtained widespread support, for Sir Charles Dilke, the chairman of the London branch, stated in February, 1870, that the subscriptions amounted to £54,000 and that it numbered 10,000 members.

High were the expectations of the Nonconformists when the Liberal party secured a majority and Mr. Gladstone formed his

Administration in 1868. 'Vast enthusiasm,' as Mr. John Morley wrote,¹ 'had been shown for the principles and persons of men whose great cry was religious equality. The victory had at length been achieved, and those who had fought the battle expected to enter into the fruits.' Equal to the expectations was the disappointment. 'The first great English measure which followed all this excitement and all this effort was a bill which Mr. Gathorne Hardy might have devised, and which a Conservative Chamber would not have rejected.'

No legislative project of a Liberal Government in recent times has caused so much regret and annoyance among a large section of their supporters as Mr. Forster's Education Bill of 1870. The voluntary system instead of being superseded was supplemented. As Mr. Bright, who had a share in the Ministerial responsibility, but was too ill to take part in the controversies, sorrowfully remarked when he was able to express his opinion, the bill 'established Boards only where the denominational system did not exist, whereas it should have attempted to establish Boards everywhere and to bring the denominational schools under their control.' Those who had hoped to stamp out sectarian teaching were exceedingly vexed when they found that the religious difficulty was not solved but evaded. The Boards, as the League complained, were to decide at their discretion upon the kind of religious instruction to be given in their schools; they were enabled to grant pecuniary assistance to the voluntary institutions; and the proposed conscience clause was inadequate. In John Stuart Mill's opinion the measure 'did not merely halt and hang back in the path of good; it did positive evil—it introduced a new religious inequality.' It gave a fresh advantage to the Established Church.

The anger of the Nonconformists was early revealed in a letter to Mr. Peter Rylands, a sturdy Radical member, from the Rev. G. S. Reaney, Warrington. Mr. Reaney described Mr. Forster as 'something like a humbug,' and said that if the Government were to force the bill through by the help of the Tory party the Nonconformists could only bide their time, and when the next fight came, leave Gladstone to his Tory friends. 'I am utterly surprised that the Cabinet ever imagined that the Nonconformist party would accept such a pro-Church measure. If this is the Liberalism of the men for whom the Dissenters fought tooth and nail I think we made a terrible blunder.'² Such a letter as that may assist the reader to appreciate the action which Mr. Chamberlain took, and the feeling which raised him to leadership. 'Not even at the bidding of a Liberal Ministry,' declared his friend, Dr. Dale, 'will we consent to any proposition which, under cover of an educational measure, empowers one religious denomin-

¹ *Fortnightly Review*, 1873.

² *Correspondence and Speeches of Peter Rylands, M.P.*

ation to levy a rate for teaching its creed and maintaining its worship.' Equally emphatic language was used by the newspaper edited by Mr. Edward Miall, Mr. Forster's colleague in the representation of Bradford. After showing that in its practical working the bill would favour one predominant sect, the *Nonconformist* firmly said that the Dissenters would not consent to this. 'They would be degenerate sons of a high ancestry if they did.'

Steps were promptly taken by the National Education League—or the Birmingham League as it was sometimes grudgingly called—and by other advocates of an unsectarian system to secure the postponement or amendment of the measure. A petition was presented by 5,173 ministers of various denominations objecting to its obnoxious provisions; and Mr. Chamberlain was the principal speaker at an interview which a deputation had with Mr. Gladstone. At their meeting in March, 1870, the Liberal chief may have noted the Birmingham Radical's quickness and cogency in argument, and no doubt the younger man who 'secured his earnest attention' watched him warily, and perhaps a little boldly, through his eyeglass. The demand of the League was that in all existing schools receiving Government grants the religious education should be given either before or after the ordinary school duties, and that all new, rate-aided schools should be unsectarian. A change made in the bill increased the hostility of Nonconformists. As the clause enabling Boards to extend rate aid to voluntary schools was strongly objected to on the ground that it would lead to fresh sectarian rivalry and contention, the Government withdrew this provision but associated the schools with the Privy Council and increased their Parliamentary grant. By the new arrangement their denominational character was secured.

Mr. Forster in carrying his Bill through Committee proved one of the most stubborn men who ever sat in the House of Commons. 'A Quaker origin,' as Mr. Morley remarks, 'is not incompatible with a militant spirit, and Forster was sturdy in combat. He had rather a full share of self-esteem, and he sometimes exhibited a want of tact that unluckily irritated or estranged many whom more suavity might have retained.' The more he was attacked the firmer he held to his own ground with what has been described as Olympian self-confidence. 'Night after night, with the aid of the Opposition, he defeated advanced Liberals and succeeded in giving a denominational character to his measure.' Pressure from without and pressure within failed to secure for the Dissenters the amendments which they desired. To some extent safeguards were provided by a time-table conscience clause and by the section associated with the name of Mr. Cowper-Temple, by which any catechism or formulary distinctive of any denomination was expressly excluded from rate-supported schools. These

concessions, however, did not remove the objections taken by Liberals. Strenuous resistance was offered to the twenty-fifth section, by which rates might be levied on the whole community to pay the fees of indigent children in denominational schools. Opposition to this provision was described by the *Times* as 'simply a matter of private pique and obstinacy' but Nonconformists seized it as the battleground for a great principle. They refused to yield to what they regarded as the imposition of a new Church rate.

There was a painful scene at the third reading of the Bill when Mr. Miall gave vent to the feelings of the Nonconformists. As one who had trusted the Government and regarded Mr. Gladstone with affection he reproached the Ministers with having betrayed their best friends and disappointed the expectations with which they were brought into power. 'Once bit, twice shy,' he bitterly exclaimed. Mr. Gladstone turned on him in an angry, severe speech. If Mr. Miall had been 'bitten' it was, said the irritated chief, only in consequence of expectations which he had himself chosen to entertain and which were not justified by the facts. 'We have been thankful to have the independent and honourable support of my honourable friend, but that support ceases to be of value when accompanied by reproaches such as these. I hope my honourable friend will not continue that support to the Government one moment longer than he deems it consistent with his sense of duty and right. For God's sake, sir, let him withdraw it the moment he thinks it better for the cause which he has at heart that he should do so.' Seldom has so much personal emotion been displayed in a political quarrel.

'It was a lovers' quarrel,' tenderly wrote Mr. Miall, but others were moved by sterner feelings. Mr. Chamberlain used the incident as the starting point of a new agitation. 'For years,' he said, at a conference of the Liberation Society, in December, 1870, 'Nonconformists had been the willing servants of the Liberal party and now it was time they claimed their wages. The political power of the Dissenters would be considered a thing of the past if they permitted themselves to be trifled with any longer by a so-called Liberal Government.' One or two gentlemen at the conference rebuked Mr. Chamberlain for his vehemence and he was told they must be wise as well as zealous, but Mr. Jesse Collings backed him up with a protest against shilly-shallying. There was much evidence of the fact that the relations of the Nonconformists to Mr. Gladstone's Ministry had undergone, as Dr. Dale remarked, a great and startling change. Confidence had given place to distrust and enthusiasm to resentment. The situation was described by Mr. Morley with biting words in the *Fortnightly*. 'Mr. Disraeli,' he wrote, 'had the satisfaction of dishing the Whigs who were his enemies. Mr. Gladstone, on the other hand, dished the Dissenters

who were his friends. Unfortunately, he omitted one element of prime importance in these rather nice transactions. He forgot to educate his party.¹ As a leader of the disappointed Dissenters whom Mr. Gladstone 'forgot to educate,' Mr. Chamberlain denounced the Government on many platforms. Early in 1871, at a meeting addressed by the members for Birmingham, he moved a resolution thanking them 'more especially for their opposition to the sectarian clauses of the Education Act and to the coalition of the Ministry with the Conservative party by which that Act was passed through Parliament.' In phrases similar to those flung in a later generation at himself the Town Councillor jeered at Mr. Forster as one 'who was once a Radical and a Quaker and who was now a Cabinet Minister and a State Churchman,' and he appealed to Nonconformists to withhold support at elections from Liberals 'until they had learned the Liberal alphabet and could spell the first words of the Liberal creed.'

Resentment was increased by the administration of the Act. Nonconformists had hoped that the Department would work it as far as possible in an undenominational manner, but they complained that Mr. Forster was playing into the hands of the clergy, especially by the encouragement given to Boards, in the exercise of their discretion, to pay the fees of poor children in voluntary schools. Against this 'subsidy to the Church' a determined agitation was directed from Birmingham. A Central Nonconformist Committee, formed there, had connexions with many towns, and in the borough itself the question became a burning and testing one. At a meeting of protest the manufacturer, who was being gradually recognized as the leader of a group of very earnest men, ridiculed the idea of the poor selecting the schools in which they would receive the benefit of the rates. Suppose, he said, that in times of great distress the Guardians established soup kitchens and gave free tickets, and Roman Catholics asked for the money so that they might take it to their cathedral and have their prayers and their soup together. 'What would be the answer of the Guardians? It would be that it was not their duty to provide Roman Catholic prayers.' On the first School Board in Birmingham Mr. Chamberlain and his friends were in a minority. They had tried to capture all the fifteen seats and won only six, his colleagues being Dale, Dawson, Vince, Dixon and Mr. J. S. Wright, the president of the Liberal Association. They fought strenuously and successfully for their principles, and in 1873, by better tactics they secured a

¹ In 1873 Mr. Morley showed no more tenderness than Mr. Chamberlain in his dealings with Mr. Gladstone. Alluding to an argument used by the great leader he said: 'A poorer sophism was never coined even in that busy mint of logical counterfeits.'

majority on the second Board, of which Mr. Chamberlain was chairman.

The quarrel over the Education Act threatened the Liberal Party with disruption. Dr. Guinness Rogers, an influential Nonconformist, who had been devoted to Mr. Gladstone and who became again an affectionate follower, said he would never help to return a Liberal until he had a clearer understanding with the Liberal party; and this was the determination expressed by many of its best and most faithful friends. As Mr. Fawcett noted, the Nonconformists were 'never gathered together in any political meeting without declaring that they had been betrayed.'

This dangerous discontent was not produced by Mr. Chamberlain, but it found in him a specially effective and resolute exponent, and he distinguished himself by the sharpness of his attacks. Already his platform style was clear and pungent, and he showed even at this early stage the uncompromising methods for which he was later so conspicuous. By the agitation, which owed much to him, Mr. Gladstone's first Government was weakened. By-elections were lost on account of the abstention of Nonconformists. Such misfortunes for the Liberal party were regarded by Mr. Chamberlain as salutary lessons. To the dissenters themselves he gave fresh courage and force; and he secured for them greater attention and influence. He would have found a political platform, even if there had been no education controversy, but the cry of betrayed Nonconformity came from his heart. His feeling as a dissenter was the most abiding of his life.

IV

EARLY POLITICAL CAREER

THE political career of Mr. Chamberlain opened after his thirtieth year. Most of the great players on the national stage begin public life at an earlier age, but for a considerable period it was necessary for the screw-maker to concentrate his energy on business ; and thus, except for his share in the local debating society, there is no evidence of his having taken part in public controversy on State affairs until the year of the passing of the Household Franchise Bill. We have seen him as a Jingo Radical in 1859 canvassing against Mr. Bright, with whom, when he was a very young man, he disputed on imperial politics at a dinner party at Mr. George Dixon's. But although he promptly joined the Liberal Association formed in Birmingham in 1865, his first political speech from the platform was delivered in a church school in 1867, when he supported Mr. Dixon's candidature. Once he entered the new career his aggressive character asserted itself. At the dinner of the Edgbaston Liberal election committee in May, 1868, he made a lively attack on the young Conservative party, which 'cloaked itself under the title of Constitutional.' He spoke several times during the general election of that year and thenceforward his political progress was continuous.

Birmingham, after it gave a seat to Mr. Bright on his rejection by Manchester, had become 'the strategic pivot' of the great army of reform ; and it fitted itself for conflict by means of the Liberal Association, which was reorganized on a representative basis in 1868, and developed into the National Federation with an ideal secretary in Mr. Francis Schnadhorst.¹ The affairs of the Association, in which the Working Men's Reform League was induced to merge itself were managed by a central body known at first as the Committee of Four Hundred, later as the Committee of Six Hundred, and subsequently the Two Thousand. Whigs were perturbed by the appearance of a popular organization which took the place of cliques and coteries in the selection of candidates and the local control of party affairs,

¹ Referring to the Central Nonconformist Committee, Dr. Crosskey notes in 1870 : 'Went with Dale to a small draper's shop and engaged its owner, Mr. Schnadhorst, for part of his time daily. This was the first introduction of Mr. Schnadhorst into public life.'

and their fears were increased when the rapidly rising Mr. Chamberlain obtained influence over it.

In 1869, the year in which he began his career as a civic reformer and assisted to found the Education League, he spoke at a meeting in the Town Hall to protest against the opposition of the House of Lords to the bill for the disestablishment of the Irish Church. After pointing out that the majority of 114 in the Commons represented the wishes of millions of people, he said in the caustic tone for which he was becoming noted in his town, that the Peers represented three things:—some of them represented the oppression of feudal lords in times gone by; some represented the great wealth acquired in the possession of land in the vicinity of large towns, which land enriched its proprietors without care or labour on their part; and lastly, they represented—and very imperfectly in many cases—the brains, the intelligence and the acquirements of ancestors long since dead who unfortunately had been unable to transmit to their descendants the talents by which they had risen. In 1871, Mr. Chamberlain figured at another demonstration against the Peers, in consequence of their hostility to the army regulation and ballot bills. Resolutions condemning the hereditary principle having been passed, he was placed on a committee to consider by what means they might be carried into effect. That, however, was not a problem to be settled by a single generation, and its settlement did not prove imperative; for purchase in the army was abolished by royal warrant and on the ballot bill being sent up a second time, the Lords yielded.

But it was not against Peers that Mr. Chamberlain's most pungent strictures as a young Radical were directed. He found much to criticise in the conduct of Mr. Gladstone's first Government. After they had been four or five years in office a distinct decline took place in their once great prestige. Several of the Ministers were personally unpopular, and the reforming energy of most of them seemed to be spent. Disraeli compared the figures on the Treasury Bench to 'a range of exhausted volcanoes'; and their eminent chief, according to the scoffer, 'alternated between a menace and a sigh.' They had exasperated a variety of conservative interests, and at the same time they were failing to satisfy the advanced section of their followers.

An article on 'The Liberal Party and its Leaders' which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* of September, 1873, carried the name of its author, Mr. Chamberlain, to many persons besides those who had followed the controversy on the schools. Mr. Morley, the editor, had visited him along with Admiral Maxse, the Crimean hero and the friend of George Meredith who had been associated with the Birmingham reformers in the Educative League. The *Saturday Review* found in the article a certain dogmatic glibness and the trite commonplaces

of a smart schoolboy. It was written in a direct, confident style, and was enlivened by literary quotations and allusions. Seldom was Mr. Chamberlain throughout his career an easy, docile, contented Liberal. Until Mr. Gladstone went too fast for him he was usually urging a forward movement. In his first essay he gave faithful admonition. Leaders without a policy and statesmen without principles found, as he severely said, their natural results in followers without loyalty and a party without discipline. It would be no small gain to the country, in his opinion, if its political leaders could be convinced that no enthusiasm would be aroused by substituting for original statesmanship a policy of compromise and weakness which was reduced at last unsuccessfully to attempt to avoid defeat by proposing nothing which was worth the trouble of attack.

A gibe was flung by the writer of the article at Mr. Gladstone. Four years previously he had referred to him as 'that great statesman,' but now he said with a sneer that 'when the Prime Minister has had an opportunity of declaring himself on subjects of the deepest interest and importance he has had as little to tell as Canning's needy knife-grinder.' Faithful followers of the Liberal chief and even some who had lifted up their voices against him were shocked by this rough language, but Mr. Chamberlain never spared censure when he considered it necessary, and although the Government had a splendid legislative record, they fell short of the Birmingham standard.

Thickly strewn over the records of thirty years are the political projects of a most fertile-minded man. His first programme, sketched at municipal ward meetings and more carefully set forth in the *Fortnightly*, consisted of Free Church, Free Land, Free Schools and Free Labour. A programme of four F.'s had been suggested previously at Glasgow by Sir Charles Dilke, but the baronet's fourth item was Free Trade. Probably Mr. Chamberlain preferred Free Labour, as a bait for the workers. 'No one of ordinary foresight and intelligence,' he wrote, 'will doubt that every item will be secured before twenty years have passed away.' After the water of double that period had flowed under the bridge part of the programme was still waiting to be carried out. The Church was not yet free; land was only a little freer than in 1873; and although fees had been abolished the schools had not realized the early Radical aspiration.

The chief feature of the *Fortnightly* article was an attack on the Established Church. In 1871 Mr. Chamberlain said it had always been the faithful ally of the landowners in their mistaken policy of Protection and now he wrote that 'the Church has not lost its evil habit of being always on the side of privilege and authority—always opposed to popular reforms. . . . Its interests are bound up with those of wealth and power and vested rights, while the Dissenters,

nearer in their origin and their circumstances to the poor, share heartily their hopes and possibly their prejudices.' He endeavoured to unite the working classes with the Nonconformists on his programme, and predicted that they would 'claim for the nation as a whole the control and management of the vast funds which have been monopolised and misappropriated by an ecclesiastical organisation.' His immediate aim, at that time and ever afterwards, was 'to force our leaders to raise a standard which we may gladly follow or to make way for bolder or more active men.'¹ Happily, there was a very bold and active man in Birmingham!

To his first Radical programme a quaint reference was made in *Recollections and Suggestions* by Lord John Russell. With his motives of progress he reminded the veteran Liberal statesman of Tony Lumpkin in *She Stoops to Conquer*. Lord John copied part of a dialogue from the play, in which Tony and his mother, as he thought, represented tolerably well Mr. Chamberlain and John Bull. When asked to describe his journey Tony says:—

You shall hear. I first took them down Featherbed Lane, where we stuck fast in the mud. I then rattled them crack over the stones of Up-and-Down Hill. I then introduced them to the gibbet on Heavy-Tree Heath; and from that with a circumbendibus, I fairly lodged them in the horse-pond at the bottom of the garden.

HASTINGS. But no accident, I hope.

TONY. No, no, only mother is confoundedly frightened.

'So, in this case,' added the veteran, 'no harm, no accident has happened, but John Bull was confoundedly frightened.'

Some hope of Radicalism was revived in Mr. Chamberlain by the reconstruction of the Government in the autumn of 1873. Mr. Bright, who was then described by Mr. Morley as 'a sounder and an older Liberal than Mr. Gladstone,' and who had resigned on account of ill health at the end of 1870, left no one in doubt as to his opinion of the Education Act. It was, he said, the worst measure passed by any Liberal Government since 1832. When, therefore, he re-entered the Cabinet in October, 1873, Nonconformists assumed that his colleagues had begun to see the error of their ways. At the meeting at which Mr. Bright addressed his constituents Mr. Chamberlain seconded a resolution welcoming that event 'as a means of reviving the enthusiasm of the Liberal party, and especially of the section of it which has been alienated by recent legislation.' 'If,' he said, in a somewhat unusual strain, 'Ministerial policy had recently struck false notes and jarred on Liberal principles until these had been like sweet bells jingling out of tune and harsh, now they looked hopefully forward,

¹ Thirty-two years later, pressing a forward policy on another party, Mr. Chamberlain said: 'No army was ever led successfully to battle on the principle that the lamest man should govern the march of the army.'

anticipating a master hand once more to touch the string and confident that the first strain of the old harmony would dispel the evil spirits of obstruction and reaction which previous discord had started into life.' To Mr. Forster, however, no mercy was shown. He was picked out for continued attack. On the eve of the general election the young Birmingham Radical said in biting manner :—' The object of the Liberal party in England, throughout the continent of Europe and in America had been to wrest the education of the young out of the hands of the priests, to whatever denomination they might belong. It would be the crowning triumph of what was called Mr. Forster's statesmanship that he had delayed this admirable consummation for perhaps another generation.'

A 'future leader of the democratic party' was recognized in Mr. Chamberlain by a London weekly newspaper as early as 1872. In November of that year his fellow-townsmen, Mr. Dixon, then one of the members for Birmingham, said he knew several reformers in the country who were even better than those in the House of Commons. There was, for instance, 'our own brilliant Joseph Chamberlain.' He was certainly thorough enough. On his first election as mayor the *Times* placed him in a special class as an 'advanced Liberal,' all the other civic chiefs being merely Liberal or Conservative. His opinions, as he noted, were apparently so exceptional that they required a special adjective for their description and he boasted that he was gratified and honoured by the distinction.

In the character of an advanced Liberal Mr. Chamberlain was at the end of 1873 invited to stand as a Parliamentary candidate for Sheffield. A local alderman had been brought out along with Mr. Mundella, whose former colleague was not offering himself for re-election, but some members of the party were dissatisfied with the alderman and induced the newly chosen mayor of Birmingham to come forward. At a public breakfast on the first day of 1874, referring to a taunt that the majority of his committee were Dissenters and working men, he said he did not expect to find the nobility and gentry from the surrounding district thronging into the town to hear him address a meeting. He did not care to go into the House of Commons as the representative of wealth and influence; these were already sufficiently represented. It was to represent the interest that he believed had been too long ignored that he wanted to go—'the interest of the poor working men and the Dissenters.' An avowal which he made on this occasion has served as a mark in controversy: 'I avow myself,' he said, 'a political Dissenter; mine is a family of political Dissenters.'

At the breakfast and an open-air meeting Mr. Chamberlain gave an exposition of views which justified *The Times* adjective 'advanced.' He exhorted Mr. Gladstone and other Liberal leaders to be more

steadfast in their course of progress, and he denounced the mockery and sham which were called representation, and according to which the voice of the majority was stifled by a mass of class interests, vested rights and hereditary privileges. They must also, he said, consider the constitution of the Second Chamber, if Second Chamber there was to be. 'Nothing could be more absurd than to obtain the opinions of thirty millions of people and then allow their deliberate decision to be perverted and thwarted by three or four hundred gentlemen who met in a gilded chamber and represented the virtues or the vices or the abilities of ancestors who died a very long time ago and who unfortunately in every case had not been able to transmit to their descendants the talents by which they themselves rose to place.' Unfolding his programme of free schools, free labour, free land and free church, Mr. Chamberlain argued with regard to the schools, that the State should confine itself to teaching those things upon which all were agreed and leave matters of religion upon which they differed to the churches or voluntary organizations and to the parents themselves. He agreed with Mr. Bright that the control of the drink traffic should be taken from irresponsible magistrates and placed entirely in the hands of the people, who, he felt confident, would find some means to diminish the evil they all deplored.

To save the party in Sheffield from being split into sections favouring the local alderman and the mayor of Birmingham respectively, it was arranged to have a test vote in Paradise Square, and this took place on January 29, 1874. Five days earlier Mr. Chamberlain's father died at his residence, Moor-Green Hall, in his seventy-eighth year. In the interval Parliament had been suddenly dissolved; so that the Radical candidate's opportunities for making the acquaintance of the electors were extremely limited.

To the people who packed Paradise Square he delivered a speech which frightened the moderate reformers, but he boldly said that as his opinions had not been assumed without reflection or consideration there was no likelihood that he would recant them. He expressed the conviction that power had been too much in the hands of the aristocracy, and that the working class had not reaped its due advantage from the changes which had occurred during the previous century. 'The rich were growing richer, and the poor were growing poorer every day.' While terrifying the timid with his description of social discontent, Mr. Chamberlain indicated a remedy. 'I find it in the frank and loyal confidence of the people in popularizing our institutions. I find it in extending education, which is the greatest enemy of class distinction. I find it in removing every pernicious restriction which has been imposed by our ancestors for the privilege of property. I believe in perfect intellectual, religious and political freedom. That

is my creed.' It included, as shown in a later chapter, the admission of Ireland's claim to Home Rule; yet advanced as it was, the creed was accepted in Paradise Square, and the pushing young mayor was chosen along with Mr. Mundella to carry the Liberal colours.

Mr. Roebuck, known as 'Tear 'Em,' who had been defeated in 1868, came forward as an independent candidate. Although still calling himself a thoroughgoing Radical, he had for several years supported the Tories. His career was to some extent a precursor of Mr. Chamberlain's. 'It is not I who have changed; it is they,' said Mr. Roebuck, as he attacked the Liberals, just as Mr. Chamberlain spoke and acted in the next generation; and like the later Tear 'Em, Mr. Roebuck advocated a new party which would be neither Whig nor Tory, but 'the party of the country itself.'

Sir Wemyss Reid, who was editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, says in his *Memoirs* that Mr. Chamberlain's speeches at Sheffield attracted some notice in Yorkshire, though they passed unobserved by the larger public beyond. 'Up to that moment,' he writes, 'I had only known Mr. Chamberlain as a young Birmingham politician who was fond of saying things both bitter and flippant, not only about his political opponents, but about the older members of his own party.' Mr. Morley took the trouble to know him better, and his speeches were not unobserved by *The Times*, which drew attention to his candidature as that of 'a prominent champion of the Birmingham Dissenters, and of advanced reform of all kinds.'

Although the Midland capital regretted the departure of its capable citizen to seek a seat elsewhere, it sent him forth with good wishes. Dr. Dale wrote expressing high admiration of the spirit of fairness and justice and generosity which had invariably distinguished him; and the *Birmingham Daily Post*, one of the ablest and steadiest supporters in the press which any politician ever had, declared that considerations higher than those which affected a particular locality rendered his presence most desirable in the House of Commons. 'No man is better qualified to make his way in the esteem of those who desire that Liberal principles shall be clearly stated and boldly maintained. To those who have any vestige of Toryism in them, Mr. Chamberlain is not likely to prove acceptable; and this we suspect is one of the strongest reasons why he should be peculiarly suited to the robust Liberalism of Sheffield.'

In the contest he encountered very powerful hostility. A section of Liberals, even in Sheffield, feared a candidate who was described as a revolutionist and Republican, and who demanded universal suffrage; he was traduced as an atheist and infidel; charges of harsh treatment of employ  s, made by a man who held up a screw at his meetings, did him harm although denied by Labour representatives

a remark as Reid -
his life & fortune
in his hands

from Birmingham ; and he lost the votes of some zealous partisans of the alderman to whom he had been preferred. He may have suffered also from the sneers which, as Sir Wemyss Reid says, he had flung at almost all the recognized leaders of Liberalism. When it was alleged during the contest that he was an enemy of the Prime Minister, he pointed to the fact that Mr. Bright, 'than whom Mr. Gladstone had no more loyal friend, and no more consistent adherent,' had publicly wished him success ; but his former taunts and criticisms rose up against him. On the other hand, Mr. Roebuck, fighting under the banner of beer and Bible, received the support of the Conservatives. The varied influences against Mr. Chamberlain prevailed. He was at the bottom of the poll, the figures being :—

Roebuck, 14,193.

Mundella, 12,858.

Chamberlain, 11,053.

The defeat of the mayor was deplored by the *Birmingham Daily Post* as 'a serious blow to the advanced Liberals and to the Nonconformists,' and on the other hand, it was noted with gratification by *The Times* as a significant rebuff, and it gave immense pleasure to the Sheffield Conservatives themselves.

The Liberal party lost heavily in the general election. There was a Jonah in the Government ship. The twenty-fifth clause of the Education Act and Mr. Forster's obstinacy, according to Mr. Bright, did much to wreck the vessel. Mr. Gladstone's own reference to the sore subject in his address was described by the National Education League as a serious misapprehension of its gravity, and on the day of the dissolution Mr. Chamberlain, as chairman of the Executive Committee, signed an appeal to the electors to exert their utmost influence upon candidates with the view of pledging them to vote for the repeal of the obnoxious clause and to resist any further concessions to denominational interests. This attitude weakened the Liberal force. For the sake of the general cause the independent section rallied at last to the Government but, as Mr. Gladstone said, they rallied too late.

They never forgave the chief offender. When he aspired to the leadership which Mr. Gladstone resigned, his candidature was opposed by the League and its numerous friends in the Liberal ranks. 'There is no vindictiveness,' wrote Mr. Morley, 'on the part of those who think Mr. Forster's attitude about the schools a reactionary mistake, nor any malice in their refusal to continue in membership in a party to which he is to dictate its policy.' Lord Hartington, the Whig, was preferred by the least Whiggish to the statesman 'who was once a Radical.' Thus retribution fell on Mr. Forster. His champions have

pointed out that his colleagues were equally responsible for the Education Act, but several of them, on obtaining their freedom from office, voted for the repeal of the clause to which there was the keenest objection, whereas he himself supported it in the Tory lobby, although nearly three hundred candidates were pledged against it.

On Mr. Chamberlain's return to Birmingham from his unsuccessful contest in Sheffield the *Town Crier* put into his mouth the words of

A MODERN ULYSSES.

I cannot rest from canvass—I have tried. . . .
 Much have I seen and known—meetings of wards, .
 Mass meetings, School Boards, Councils, Caucuses—
 Myself not silent, heard among them all. . . .
 'Tis not too late to seek another seat ;
 For my purpose holds
 To rise above the Council and the Board
 And sit in Parliament before I die.
 It may be I shall reach the Happy House
 And see the great Mundella whom I knew.

The independence of his political career was suspended for only a very brief period. We found him at Sheffield calling upon Mr. Bright as a witness that he was no enemy of Mr. Gladstone. Before twelve months had passed he was again addressing his defeated leader with great freedom. 'It may be at once admitted,' he wrote in the *Fortnightly* of October, 1874, 'that if the late Prime Minister is willing once more to lead the advance, no better and no more skilful general can be found or desired.' But he proceeded : 'Much as Mr. Gladstone is honoured and respected, it is not for his credit or for ours that we should take him back as we recover a stolen watch—on the condition that no questions are asked.' Mr. Chamberlain went so far as to describe Mr. Gladstone's election address as 'the meanest public document that has ever, in like circumstances, proceeded from a statesman of the first rank,' and to denounce his manifesto as 'simply an appeal to the selfishness of the middle classes.' It was for the Radicals and Nonconformists that he claimed to write, although most of them treated the Liberal chief with much less disrespect. His gibes were considered cruel and in bad taste. Even the *Daily Telegraph* remarked that 'when Mr. Gladstone had just fallen from power—when the great Liberal lion lay asleep after his defeat—Mr. Chamberlain crept up to give a safe kick at the leader who had led the party in a succession of magnificent campaigns.'

The article entitled 'The Next Page of the Liberal Programme,'¹⁸⁷⁸ which attracted the attention of all politicians, appeared in the same number of the *Fortnightly* as a chapter of *Beauchamp's Career* in which Mr. Chamberlain might have found an interesting study of the character of his friend, Admiral Maxse. To have had some brilliant pages from

George Meredith along with a bold political contribution from the rising Radical was a triumph for the editor, although in later years Mr. Morley may have raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders at the recollection of Mr. Chamberlain's readiness to dispense with the chief whose trusted lieutenant he himself became. The Birmingham championship of the Radicals was confident enough. 'Without them,' said the politician whose pen was almost as pungent as his tongue, 'it would be difficult to distinguish the party of the Moderate Tories, who do not practise their principles, from the party of the Moderate Liberals, who have no principles to practise. Political opinions on both sides are becoming gelatinous, and in the case of the Liberals, it is Radicalism which gives all the flavour.'

Separation of Church and State was the subject which Mr. Chamberlain wished to write on the Next Page. It was indeed for refusing to promote disestablishment that Mr. Gladstone received his warning. 'Mr. Gladstone, it is true,' he wrote, 'commissioned his son to say at Whitby that this page of Liberal history would not bear his name; but the rapidly changing conditions of the problem may yet cause him to reconsider a decision which might place him at no distant date in opposition to the will of a clear majority of the nation. If, however, Mr. Gladstone feels that he has done his work, his worst enemies will admit that he has earned his right to repose. His absence from the field may alter the character of the battle, but will not delay the encounter nor change the fortunes of the fight. Great crises do not wait for leaders, but create, or do without them.'

On account of the *Fortnightly* article scorn and abuse were poured on Mr. Chamberlain. By one superior critic he was compared to a Yankee opposition orator on the stump, and no severer censure seemed possible. Whigs as well as Tories shuddered at his sentiments and still more at the boldness of his language. What was thought of him on the other hand in sympathetic quarters may be gathered from a note in *English Radical Leaders*, published in 1875. 'A representative man, in the best sense, of the well-to-do English middle class, Mr. Chamberlain,' as the friendly writer recorded, 'has already achieved, without any fortuitous aids, a position of considerable influence. It is not too much to say that his opinions are largely instrumental in moulding the demands of advanced Radical and Liberal politicians in Great Britain.'

Not yielding to censure, and not valuing praise overmuch, he continued to advocate the first of his programmes. He kept disestablishment in the forefront, and was regarded with increasing favour by Nonconformists. Presiding on May 3, 1876, at the annual meeting of the Liberation Society held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he produced a great impression by his zeal; and he was equally effective

in exciting enthusiasm at similar gatherings elsewhere. Temperance was another of his lofty causes. In an article he pointed out 'The Right Method with the Publicans,' and in a second he advocated Municipal Public Houses. Mr. Robert Lowe had said that there were causes at work which would gradually and ultimately eradicate the evils of intemperance. In old age Mr. Chamberlain himself spoke in the same strain. At the time of his early programme, however, he was less patient. 'No doubt,' he scornfully wrote, 'there are causes at work which tend to the ultimate eradication of everything, but why must the present generation go on wearing the devil's chain? It is no comfort to families whose happiness has been wrecked, and their homes made desolate by the drunkenness of some relative, to hear that in a century or two a millennium may be expected in which the evil of drinking will disappear.'

REPUBLICANISM AND ROYALTY

THE taint of Republicanism adhered for a long time to Mr. Chamberlain. Perhaps he was not anxious at first to get rid of it. On the other hand, his language was sympathetic rather than definite. On the fall of the French Empire, in 1870, he attended a meeting of congratulation held in Birmingham and in supporting a resolution, 'That we rejoice that the irrepressible instinct of the French people for the divine right of self-government has re-established their Republic after a century of sacrifices for freedom,' he said he did not feel any great horror at the idea of the possible establishment of a Republic in our own country. He was quite certain that sooner or later it would come! For an address by Charles Bradlaugh on 'The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick,' the use of the Town Hall was requested by a Republican committee, and the memorial came before the Town Council on October 10, 1871. The mayor moved the rejection of the application on the ground that the lecture was an attack on the reigning House, but this plea failed to frighten Councillor Chamberlain. He supported the petition, remarking that he did not think there was anything stronger against the House of Brunswick in Bradlaugh's impeachment than in the lecture on 'The Four Georges' which Thackeray had given in Birmingham.

Controversy took place in later years as to the character in which he presided at the Electoral Reform Congress in St. James's Hall, London, on November 12, 1872. When he wished to minimize his connexion with Republicanism he explained that he attended on behalf of the Birmingham Liberal Association, and that the proposal of the Republican Club of his borough that he should represent it was made without his knowledge. At the time, however, he appeared to acquiesce in a proposal which in itself indicated the impression produced by his speeches and sentiments. He announced at the Congress that he had been delegated to attend by the Liberal Association and had been nominated as the representative of several Non-conformist Committees, 'and in common with Mr. Cattell as the representative of the Birmingham Republican Club.'

A great sensation was caused by a speech which Councillor Cham-

berlain delivered, in proposing the health of Queen Victoria, at a dinner which he gave on December 5, 1872, to the volunteers who had worked for him in a municipal contest. The views which he then expressed were not those of a scatterbrained youth. He was thirty-six, and a leader in civic, educational and political reform. Among the many bad qualities which his opponents discovered in him the one, he said, which perhaps exercised them most was his Republicanism. He had not introduced that matter into the contest, but when he was attacked he was bound as an honest man to avow the opinions which he entertained and to defend them as he best might. Thus he set them forth—

1876
X

He was one of those who held—and he was bound to say he thought there were very few intelligent and educated men who did not hold—the opinion that the best form of government for a free and enlightened people was that of a Republic, and, moreover, that that was the form of government to which the nations of Europe were surely and not very slowly tending. At the same time he was not at all prepared to enter into an agitation in order to upset the existing order of things, in order to destroy the Monarchy and to change the name of the titular ruler of this country. He thought that was a matter of not the slightest importance. What was of real importance was that Republican opinions—what he believed to be the true Republican spirit—should be spread among the people. The idea that, to his mind, underlay Republicanism, was this: that in all cases merit should have its fair chance, and that it should not be handicapped in the race, that it should not be preceded by the accident of birth and of privilege, that all special privileges that interfered with the happiness of the people should be swept away, that men should have equal rights before the law and equal opportunities of serving their country, and lastly that the principle of fraternity should prevail and that every effort should be made to promote, as far as possible, friendly feelings among the various classes of the country. If when these objects were attained the majority of his countrymen were still anxious to have what Mr. Frederic Harrison had very wittily called a hereditary grand master of the ceremonies he did not think there would be any need to quarrel with their taste or to dispute the decision at which they had arrived.¹

In reply to a 'heckler' at Sheffield, when offering himself as a candidate in January, 1874, Mr. Chamberlain spoke guardedly. He said: 'As to the Queen, he, like every wise citizen, had the highest personal esteem and respect for her. He did not think the question of Republican institutions in England was at present a practical question at all. As a matter of theory the best form of government for a free people was a popular form in which merit was always preferred to both.' He continued, however, to be described in the press as a Republican.

* * * * *

On account of Mr. Chamberlain's daring opinions and aggressive tongue a very lively interest was taken in the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to open the new municipal buildings in Birmingham

¹ *Birmingham Daily Post.*

during his mayoralty in November, 1874. The newspapers reveal the amusement with which the piquant affair was watched. The Mayor's bold attacks on the Liberal leaders, his eloquent championship of the Dissenters, his speeches at Sheffield on social discontent, his attacks on privilege and his Republican sympathies had drawn general attention to the man who was to receive their royal highnesses, and London turned upon him a quizzing gaze. He was sneeringly reminded that it had been written of him that he had already been favoured with an interview by the Prince and had endeavoured to explain to him, with only partial success, the advantage of surrendering to the people his rights of succession! In a mocking vein *The Times* remarked with reference to Mr. Chamberlain's introduction to the royal visitors, that the curiosity of the polite crowd was as great as it was when Mayor Pétion was presented to Marie Antoinette. This was the heavy, virtuous Parisian who in a historic procession to Paris, 'at his luncheon, comfortably filled his wine-glass in the Royal berline, flung out his chicken-bones past the nose of Royalty itself, and on the King's saying, France cannot be a Republic, answered No, it is not ripe yet.' The Mayor of Birmingham might have been polite enough to give a similar response if the Prince of Wales had made the same remark, but his critics promptly learned that he did not belong to the order of men who throw chicken-bones past the royal face. His conduct on the occasion of the royal visit was one of the earliest surprises in a life of surprises.

At the borough boundary he received the great personages who had driven from Packington Hall. In the first carriage with the Prince and Princess and their host (Lord Aylesford) sat a statesman, 'the serious son of a serious duke,' whose career crossed and recrossed Mr. Chamberlain's. Did any presage of conflict flash through his sharp and busy brain when, after he had been presented by Lord Aylesford, he raised his eyeglass and looked at Lord Hartington? Or was his mind preoccupied by the cares of the courtier? Fastidious critics discerned no embarrassment in the mayor's behaviour, and as each hour of the royal visit passed their wonder and admiration grew. Here was no rude demagogue—no man of ordinary talents. His speech at lunch, in giving the toast of the Prince and Princess, produced a most agreeable impression. 'I do not doubt,' he said, 'that the result of their visit, under the circumstances, is to draw closer the ties between the throne and the people, and to increase the popularity already enjoyed by the members of the royal house—a popularity based quite as much on their hearty sympathy and frank appreciation of the wishes of the nation as on their high position and exalted rank.' Their royal highnesses were delighted with their visit; and thus Mr. Chamberlain, while his Parliamentary career was

approaching, won the friendship of his future king and queen without forfeiting the respect of political friends or municipal colleagues.

Testimony was borne in various quarters to the correctness of his conduct. His own fellow-townsmen were gratified and at the same time amused by the ease with which, as an evening newspaper recorded, he showed himself a perfect courtier all through the proceedings; and some of the spectators who had come to sneer went away with praise on their tongues and their pens, declaring that he had said the right thing and behaved as a gentleman. A reporter who had chronicled many mayors' speeches, delivered before royal personages, doubted if he had ever heard any which were couched in such a tone at once of courteous homage, manly independence, and gentlemanly feeling, which were so perfectly becoming and so much the right thing in every way as those of Mr. Chamberlain; and with all its editorial authority *The Times*, which had shuddered at the mayor's politics, generously admitted that his reception of the Prince and Princess was 'simple, dignified, and becoming, and the speeches in which he proposed the health of Her Majesty and of their Royal Highnesses were as distinguished for their loyal courtesy as by their self-respect.'

Punch depicted Mr. Chamberlain as 'a Brummagem Lion,' kneeling before the Princess, submissively laying his claws on her lap and concealing the *Fortnightly Review* behind his back, while the Prince, with hand on mouth, represses a smile. The cartoon was accompanied by the following amusing verses which enable us to realize the feeling of the time—

A BRUMMAGEM LION

(Reproduced by permission of the proprietors of 'Punch')

That this Brummagem Republican Mayor ironical fate should tether,
With this pleasant Prince and Princess of Wales in hardware handcuffs together;
That this Chamberlain must hide his red cap—not to speak, as yet, of destroying
it—

And bow his bow, and speak his address, and feel how his Council's enjoying it!

But *Punch* gives credit where credit is due, and if Chamberlain *have* put his foot
in it,

And set up his Tree of Liberty, without first making sure there's a root in it,
And talked a great deal of brag and bounce and nonsense, and written more,
Punch owns that Birmingham's banner, in this fix, he gallantly bore.

Like a gentleman he has comported himself in this glare of the Princely sun;
Has said just what he ought to have said, and done what he ought to have done;
Has put his red cap in his pocket, and sat on his *Fortnightly* article,
And of Red Republican claws or teeth displayed not so much as a particle.

Nay, this Brummagem Republican Lion for the nonce has ta'en to roar him
As gently as any sucking dove, or the gentle Princess before him:
Has laid his awful claws in her lap, and meekly begged her to clip 'em—
And *has* promised, if smaller lions dared roar, to take and whip 'em—

In short, has behaved himself less like a Republican than a Chamberlain Who has worn a gold key all his life, and in *maréchal*-powder and amber lain ; There's only *one* little query, which e'en a kind *Punch* can't smother— On which side is the electro-plate—the 'advanced' face, or the other ?

A caricature called *A Vision of the Future*, which amused the people of Birmingham, depicted the arch-Radical on his knees receiving the honour of knighthood. If he had been an ordinary man this would have been his gratifying reward. The gift of prophecy, withheld from the artist, was granted to Mr. Newdegate, a stiff Midland Tory who was impressed by the manner in which Mr. Chamberlain played the host and the infinite grace with which he conducted the Princess to the luncheon table, and who was reported by Mr. T. H. S. Escott (Mr. Morley's successor as editor of the *Fortnightly*) to have said : ' It was the prettiest sight I ever saw in my life : Chamberlain I always suspected to be a born courtier and squire of dames—by the time he is sixty he will be working together with Robert Cecil.' A prediction that was fulfilled !

Soon after the royal visit, with its glimpse of the complex character of the Republican mayor, he was plunged into deep grief. The death of his second wife in February, 1875, was a terrible stroke to a man who, with increasing political and municipal duties, relied greatly on the aid and solace of home life. This aspect of his loss was alluded to by his friend, Mr. C. E. Mathews, at a public meeting. The blow which he had sustained ' could only be guessed at by those who had watched in the midst of a laborious and successful public career how closely he had clung to domestic ties.' Condolence was expressed by the Town Council, one alderman remarking that the sad event had fallen on the whole town as a bereavement is seldom felt out of a particular family, and another stating that those who were present at the funeral scarcely ever witnessed an event so solemn and so touching. Mr. Chamberlain tendered his resignation as mayor, but the Council would not accept it, and although he suffered another severe affliction by the death of his mother in the following August, the call to public duty was too urgent and imperious to be ignored. He was, indeed, at the gateway of the avenue which led to fame.

VI

RADICAL MEMBER

'AT the age of forty,' said the *Birmingham Daily Post*, in a review of Mr. Chamberlain's career at a much later period, 'he had already achieved sufficient to satisfy the ambitions of most men. Combining astonishing energy with a remarkable capacity for leadership, he had done an enormous amount of social and philanthropic work before he entered the City Council, and then in the short space of a three years' mayoralty he carried three schemes, each of which would have appeared too colossal for attack to a man with an ordinary outlook on life.' It was after accomplishing all this that he entered the arena where he won world-wide celebrity.

A seat in Parliament was found for Mr. Chamberlain as a representative of Birmingham on the retirement of Mr. Dixon in June, 1876. No doubt or hesitation was felt by the local Liberals with regard to the man they should select. As soon as the vacancy was announced the new candidate was chosen with enthusiasm by the Committee of the Four Hundred. The president of the Association, giving an assurance which might have been reserved for a quarter of a century, stated that although he had passed the borderland between youth and middle age he had still all his intellectual vigour and all his physical powers in full activity. Popular faith in Mr. Chamberlain was quaintly expressed at the nomination meeting by a working man who said: 'Joseph, thou hast been faithful over the things in our borough—over the things we have committed to thy trust thou hast been faithful; we will make thee a ruler of the nation.' In the same phraseology another elector, at a public meeting held after the new member's unopposed return, declared: "We can trust our Joseph to go down into Egypt where, fearless of the power of Pharaoh and the seductions of Potiphar's wife, he will do his duty to his constituents.'

Tory newspapers sneered at 'our Joseph,' but the term was one of endearment in Birmingham, and as the local Liberal organ said: 'We give the nation of our best, even though our own interests may suffer by the gift.' Mr. Chamberlain had retired from business two years previously to devote himself to the affairs of his fellow-citizens, and now—while he retained his connection with the Council as an

alderman—he resigned the mayoralty and the chairmanship of the School Board in order that he might give his whole time to politics and the public interest for the remainder of his life. It was said that Mr. Chamberlain went to Parliament as the representative of Dr. Dale. ‘Well,’ he retorted, ‘if that be so there is not a representative in the House of Commons who will have a better, wiser or nobler constituency.’ His credentials were summed up by the *Daily Post* in a passage which, although eulogistic, may be read without much allowance being required for local partiality. ‘The education campaign, in which as chairman of the Committee of the League, and as one of its founders, he took so large a share, made him widely known in all the great centres of population in the country. His gallant fight as one of the Liberal candidates for Sheffield, though unsuccessful in its immediate purpose, gave him reputation as an earnest and advanced Liberal politician, and established his rank as a speaker of no ordinary range and power. His rare combination of literary skill with oratorical faculty has made him known as a vigorous and attractive political writer, and as a thinker whose opinions and conclusions, however much in some quarters they may challenge dissent, must at least command examination.’

On the threshold of his Parliamentary career Mr. Chamberlain gave offence to a great political party. Within a few hours of his selection as candidate, he made at a School Board meeting an attack on Disraeli which friends found ‘unjustifiable and most regrettable.’ Criticising Lord Sandon’s Education Bill he imputed to the Conservative Government deliberate dishonesty, and described Mr. Disraeli as ‘a man who never told the truth except by accident, a man who went down to the House of Commons and flung at the British Parliament the first lie that entered his head . . . a man who on fifty other occasions had deliberately played with the House of Commons and exhibited his cynical contempt for the honour of England.’ For this language he was denounced in the press throughout the country. The *Daily Telegraph* said it looked as if he were possessed of what horse-dealers call ‘an ugly temper’; the *Sportsman* advised him to simulate the language of a gentleman; the *Globe* scolded him for Billingsgate, a free use of calumny, threadbare fustian, intemperate rhetoric..

A prompt apology was offered by the offender. In a published letter he expressed regret that he should have used expressions which conveyed, or could be construed into an imputation on the personal character of members of the Government. ‘I hope,’ he wrote, ‘it may be accepted as an extenuation of an unwitting offence, that I have been greatly over-worked lately, and that I was speaking without preparation under considerable mental strain, and in face of

somewhat irritating interruptions.' The apology was not considered satisfactory by all his opponents. A member of the School Board, denying provocation, stated that he spoke with the aid of notes which he had made during the debate, and the local Tory organ, the *Daily Gazette*, took the opportunity to expatiate on his tongue and temper. The *Saturday Review* sneered at him as a fair example of the Mechanics Institute mind and strongly protested against a man capable of such gross and vulgar abuse being sent to Parliament, while a speaker at a meeting in his own town said the sooner he was sent to St. Stephen's to learn manners the better.

The Liberal leaders were not forgotten by the daring man who caused so much annoyance in the Conservative camp. Instead of showing meekness and docility when about to sit near them, he said in his first speech to his constituents: 'We hear a great deal about the loyalty which the rank and file owe to the chiefs of the party, but may we not fairly ask whether some loyalty is not due from the leaders of the party to the principles by which the party is governed?' In this challenging mood, with the reputation of a good platform speaker, of a successful man of business, of a great municipal administrator and of an advanced and rather dangerous Radical and political Dissenter, he went from Birmingham to Westminster.

Disraeli was within a few weeks of the close of his career in the House of Commons when Mr. Chamberlain entered it. There, the newcomer found also the gentle-mannered, fair-minded Sir Stafford Northcote; Mr. Gathorne Hardy, a fluent orator and a favourite of the country squires; Mr. Assheton Cross, an unornamental Home Secretary; Lord John Manners, the champion of the old nobility; and the hard-headed, hard-hitting, dogged Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, with whom the pushful mayor was to be closely associated ten years later. On the front Opposition bench were statesmen whom Mr. Chamberlain had counselled and rebuked. Lord Hartington had already been the subject of his strictures, Mr. Goschen had shared the sneers aimed at 'moderate Liberals,' and Mr. Forster had no reason to be grateful for the election of the Leaguer who did so much to discredit his education policy. Mr. Bright took comparatively little part in Parliamentary controversy, and Mr. Gladstone, to whom in retirement the hearts of Liberals fondly turned, only flashed on the familiar scene at incalculable intervals. On the Conservative side sat a tall, thin, elegant young man, who was known chiefly as the nephew of the Marquis of Salisbury, and who was pondering *A Defence of Philosophic Doubt*. An alliance between Arthur Balfour and Joseph Chamberlain in the government of the country would have seemed then more unlikely than official co-operation between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli.

Introduced by John Bright and Joseph Cowen, the new member took his seat on July 13. While he was waiting on a cross-bench below the bar he did what others did; he put on his hat. This proceeding on the part of a man who had not been introduced was a dreadful breach of Parliamentary etiquette. Conventional members saw in it a portent. The doorkeeper pointed out to the newcomer his error, and after a discreet interval he uncovered his head, whereupon the sensitive champions of order breathed again. His reception was thus described by the unsympathetic *Birmingham Gazette*; 'A slight buzz of expectation passed through the House. . . . The general feeling seemed to be one of curiosity rather than enthusiasm. On the Conservative side of the House there was silence. Above the gangway on the Liberal side there was silence also. Below the gangway on the Opposition benches there was a slight cheer; and that was all.' Mr. Chamberlain took his seat among the independent Liberals below the gangway. There he found a member as remarkable as himself—Charles Stewart Parnell, who had been elected for Meath in April, 1875. He became intimate with the famous Irishman, and as he told the House of Commons, after their estrangement, 'we did not look at questions altogether from the same point of view. Nevertheless we found that at times we could act with each other, and our intercourse was close and frank.'

Soon after his election, a friend came to the confident Radical and said: 'Would you mind, as I am an older member, my giving you a little bit of advice?' Of course he made a polite response and the friend went on: 'Well, you know, you have come into the House of Commons rather late, and you have come with some sort of reputation from outside. The House of Commons does not like outside reputations; it is accustomed to make and unmake its own, and I think that if you would not mind—if you could contrive to break down a little, I think the House would take it as a compliment, and you would be all the better for it.' To break down was more than Mr. Chamberlain could contrive. Out of respect for the assembly he was 'so proud to enter' he had intended to remain silent for the few weeks that remained of his first session, but even this reticence was impossible.

His voice was heard for the first time in the House on August 4, when Lord Sandon's Education Bill drew him into debate in defence of the Birmingham School Board. He rose from the third bench below the Opposition gangway—a bench from which in later years many a taunt was flung at him by Mr. Healy, Mr. Dillon and Mr. T. P. O'Connor. The Prime Minister, whom he had attacked a few weeks previously in Birmingham, sauntered in, and raising his eyeglass between thumb and forefinger, scrutinized the new member. Prob-

ably Mr. Disraeli was less surprised than some of his friends who had queer notions of Radical mayors when he watched the smartly dressed man with youthful-looking face and slim figure and heard the clear, penetrating, subdued voice. It was appropriate that Mr. Chamberlain should make his maiden speech on the subject which had given him notoriety. His experience, he said, had led him to the conclusion that the religious difficulty was not a parents' difficulty and that in fact very little would be heard of it if the priests and parsons would stand aside. He advocated the separation of religious and secular education, and said it was believed that by throwing religious instruction on voluntary effort they would secure much more satisfactory results. In this strain he spoke for about twenty minutes and he sat down amid the hearty cheering of the Liberals.

According to a correspondent who wrote with a friendly but not uncritical pen, 'he addressed the House with the greatest fluency and self-possession; his elocution was good and free from provincialisms; his manner was persuasive and his voice agreeable; and what was especially remarkable was that he struck at once, and as to the manner born, the conversational key and tone of argument which characterizes the present House of Commons.' Compliments flowed from several speakers. Colonel Nolan, an Irish Catholic, whose point of view was far from Mr. Chamberlain's, described his speech as able and temperate, and Radical Mr. Hopwood remarked that it must have been listened to with attention and pleasure by all who heard it. Praise came even to the lips of Mr. Forster, who was unaccustomed to the paying of soft compliments. More than any other member he might have grudged praise to the conspicuous assailant of his education compromise, but generosity was not among the qualities which this rugged man lacked, and he congratulated his antagonist on 'the remarkable ability with which he had realized the expectations entertained by many of his colleagues.'

A cynic hastily likened Mr. Chamberlain in his spruceness to a ladies' doctor, and he was evidently regarded as the mildest-mannered Radical that ever cut a political throat. Even that rigid, old-fashioned Tory, Sir Walter Barttelot, praised him when he delivered his second speech—on the Prisons Bill—on February 15, 1877. With kindly condescension Sir Walter encouraged him by saying his views were expressed 'with a convincing calmness which was so acceptable in that House.'

His first elaborate speech in Parliament was on the Gothenburg licensing system. He spent part of the recess in 1876 along with Mr. Jesse Collings, in a visit to Sweden and Lapland and an inquiry into the working of the municipal control of the liquor traffic. In January, 1877, he induced the Town Council of Birmingham to apply

to Parliament for powers to adopt a similar system ; and in the House of Commons on March 13 he proposed to enable municipalities to acquire the existing interests in the retail of intoxicating drinks, and, if they saw fit, to carry on the trade for the convenience of the inhabitants. He remarked that moral suasion had been practised for more than thirty years, and had never reduced the returns, nor diminished the gains of a single person engaged in the trade, and he feared that the evidence would not warrant them in believing that any better results would follow the progress of education than had followed the exercise of moral suasion. On the other hand he felt certain that if the community were entrusted with the control of the drink shops, one half of them would, as a matter of course, be immediately abandoned, and the remainder be placed under strict control. He spoke of ' the baneful influence of a gigantic, vested interest, whose tyranny and whose insolence must be as repugnant to those who could profit by it as it was to those who were suffering from its oppression.'

The favourable impression produced by his earlier efforts was confirmed by his comparatively long speech on this occasion. He delivered it from Mr. Bright's old place at the upper end of the second bench below the gangway. ' His voice,' a critic wrote, ' is perfect ; his articulation distinct. His action, too, is good ; he knows what to do with his hands.' Fault was found only with his use of an eyeglass, but to this the House became accustomed. His lucidity was admired by all listeners, and there was again an air of wonder at the temperate tone of one who, as Sir Wilfrid Lawson remarked, had been looked upon as a rather dangerous and revolutionary character. Notwithstanding his lucidity and moderation, his resolution was rejected by 103 votes to 51, the minority consisting mainly of Radicals and Irish.

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The complaint of imperialists that they hear too much of domestic policy and too little of foreign affairs did not apply to the Disraeli regime. When Mr. Chamberlain entered Parliament the Eastern Question forced forward by the outrages in Bulgaria, was beginning to disturb Europe, and a few weeks later Mr. Gladstone, who for three years made this subject the main business of his life, stirred the national conscience by a famous pamphlet. His demand for the expulsion of Turkish power ' bag and baggage ' from the oppressed and desolated province was enthusiastically supported by Radicals. Instead of now attaching conditions to his return Mr. Chamberlain appealed to him to resume the leadership of the Liberal force, and expressed the belief that Lord Hartington would be the first to urge him to put on once more his well-dinted armour. The veteran refused to do what the new member and many others suggested, but he acted with such vigour and spoke with such eloquence that the great mass of the party turned

to him for guidance. In April, 1877, without the support of the official leaders of the Opposition, Mr. Gladstone gave notice of five resolutions declaring that Turkey, by its misgovernment, had lost all claim to support, and calling for the joint intervention of the Powers. To meet, however, the views of his former colleagues he withdrew four of his resolutions, and moved only the general censure of the Porte. According to Lord Elcho, he thus lay down in peace with both Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain, while Mr. Bright gave them all his blessing. This was an inaccurate account of the position. Although the whole ground was covered by Mr. Gladstone's speech, which Mr. Arthur Balfour regarded as an unequalled feat of Parliamentary courage, Parliamentary skill, Parliamentary endurance and Parliamentary eloquence, the Radicals were disappointed by the modification of the resolutions and their new leader from Birmingham undertook the advocacy of joint intervention.

Political friendship between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain was promoted by a visit which the elder statesman paid to Birmingham in the summer of 1877, at the inauguration of the National Liberal Federation. Mr. Chamberlain invited him in what Lord Granville described as 'a very well-written letter.'¹ There was some fear lest the active Radical who was endeavouring to reorganize the party might set up the old chief against Lord Hartington and hail him as a returned leader. Perhaps a hint was sent to Birmingham that this would be embarrassing. Indiscreet language was avoided.

Mr. Gladstone, who was the guest of the new member delivered, on May 31, a thrilling oration on the Eastern Question to an audience of 25,000 people in Bingley Hall, and his next day's engagements included an interview with Cardinal Newman at which his host was present. 'Saw Mr. Chamberlain's very pleasing children,' is a note in the statesman's diary, reproduced by Mr. Morley. Host and guest praised one another. At a banquet Mr. Chamberlain, who may have regretted his attack on Mr. Gladstone's last election address, proposed the health of the visitor in a glowing eulogy, recalling the years in Queen Victoria's reign.

When statesmen at her council met
Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet.

No words could have pleased Mr. Gladstone better, and he in turn paid a friendly tribute to 'my kind host, and your respected well-known and distinguished member, Mr. Chamberlain.' The restlessness of the younger Radical at the same time provoked some

¹ *Life of Lord Granville*, by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice.

banter from Mr. Bright. 'His great complaint,' said the tribune, 'is that nobody is active enough for him; and next week, after the great week which you have experienced here, I am afraid he will be looking forward to some further great political excitement.' 'Mr. Chamberlain looks through his eye-glass,' he added, 'as if he was only waiting till I should resume my seat, and then he might answer this charge which I have brought against him.'

In the agitation on the Eastern Question Mr. Chamberlain took a prominent part by formulating Liberal opinion through the new Federation and by addressing a large number of meetings. The object of the meetings, as he said in his pithy style, was to prevent a drop of blood from being shed, or a pound of English treasure being spent in order to uphold the detestable tyranny of the Turks; and to enlist all the influence which could be exercised by diplomacy in order to secure the better government of their Christian provinces. Opinion in this country was divided between sympathy with those provinces and fear of their patron, the Tsar. At the beginning of 1878, when the Russian forces entered Adrianople and reached the Sea of Marmora, popular feeling was excited by the supposed danger to our interests at Constantinople, and there was an outburst of jingoism when the British fleet was ordered to the Dardanelles as a warning demonstration, but Mr. Chamberlain declared in the House of Commons that our interests in the east of Europe included not merely the good government and the welfare of the Christian inhabitants of Turkey, but also more cordial and friendly relations between Russia and England. If this question were once satisfactorily settled, he did not see any reason why these two countries should be alienated from one another.

Jingo feeling became still more excited when Disraeli insisted on the Treaty of San Stefano, which was concluded between Russia and Turkey, being submitted to the European Powers. The decision of the Government to call out the Reserves and summon Indian troops to Malta was noisily applauded. Still the Radicals resisted the popular sentiment. In April a deputation of about 450 representative men, organized by the Committee of the Federation and the National Reform Union, under the direction of Mr. Chamberlain, had an interview with the Opposition leaders, whose attitude did not satisfy them; and in the House of Commons Sir Wilfrid Lawson submitted an amendment declaring that the calling out of the Reserves was neither prudent in the interests of European peace nor necessary for the sake of the country, nor warranted by the state of matters abroad. This, although moved against the desire of the party chiefs, was supported by Mr. Chamberlain. It had been said that the Treaty of San Stefano would abrogate Turkey in Europe. 'If that were all,'

said Mr. Chamberlain, 'so much the better for the world. Turkey in Europe was an anachronism, and the sooner she was abrogated the better for the Turkish provinces.' Lord Hartington, deprecating 'this unfortunate and ill-advised amendment,' urged that it was not desirable to multiply occasions of difference between the one side of the House and the other. The mover, however, took a division, and Mr. Chamberlain acted with him as teller.

Liberals of the two sections united after the Berlin Congress. The Treaty of San Stefano was in most of its essential features ratified by the Congress, and thus it led to the emancipation of eleven millions of people from the Turkish yoke, but by an arrangement with the Porte we acquired Cyprus and undertook to defend Turkey against Russian aggression in Asia. Lord Hartington, on August 1, submitted a resolution to the House deploring that an engagement had been entered into and responsibilities incurred without the previous knowledge of Parliament. The speech which Mr. Chamberlain delivered on this issue was strikingly in contrast with his imperialist orations of later years. Although willing to undertake a certain responsibility, he declared that already the weary Titan staggered under 'the too vast orb of her fate,' and he denounced the Government for having spent ten millions to satisfy the 'vulgar patriotism of the music-halls.' He complained that the British plenipotentiaries at the Congress showed themselves the ready and willing champions of the selfish fears and jealousies of great despotisms, and that on more than one occasion they repressed the aspirations and limited the claims of the subject-nationalities. One of these plenipotentiaries became his first chief in a Unionist Government, and the private secretary who accompanied that Minister to Berlin was his second coalition chief. From the latter he received the sternest rebuke in the controversy, Mr. Arthur Balfour complaining of his 'most bitter harangues' and deploring that he remembered too much that they belonged to different parties and too little that they belonged to the same country. The unrepentant Mr. Chamberlain exclaimed a few years later with reference to the Congress :—

But all the honour Salisbury hath won
Is that he was the Lord Ambassador.

VII

CONSERVATIVE BOGEY

EVEN when Mr. Chamberlain sat below the gangway in his first Parliament his schemes to make the world better than he found it began to irritate politicians who thought either that this was the best of all possible worlds or that they themselves were the persons to reform it. Sir Robert Peel, the great statesman's son and elder brother of the celebrated Speaker, remarked that the member for Birmingham was always ready to bring forward his patent medicines for remedies. 'Chamberlain's plans,' he said, were so constantly produced in the Midlands that he was quite sick of them. Another interesting criticism was that of Lord Derby, who remarked that Mr. Chamberlain reminded him of the American politician of whom it was said : 'He's beat, but he ain't going to stay beat.' Certainly he did not at this or any other stage of his career stay beat. He continued on every opportunity to advocate Free Schools, Free Land, Free Church ; and in 1878 he anticipated the institution of local government by urging that the administration of county business should be entrusted to a Board elected directly by a household franchise. Many years were to pass ere the Conservatives recognized the necessity of popular county government, and at this time Mr. Chaplin, his friend at a later epoch, confronted Mr. Chamberlain with their fears and prejudices.

Whigs and Tories were frightened by the new political 'machine,' of which the rising Radical was the most conspicuous promoter. He gave the whole credit for it to his friend, Mr. William Harris, the honorary secretary of the Birmingham Liberal Association. This Association, based in 1868 upon purely representative principles, had for half a dozen years few imitators, but after the general election of 1874, when the Liberal party maintained its position in Birmingham while sustaining many defeats elsewhere, one constituency after another adopted the new model. The next step taken was to unite the Associations in a National Federation. This movement, like so many others, originated in Birmingham. On the invitation of the officers of several Associations a conference was held there in May, 1877 ; it was attended by delegates from many parts of the country ; the Federation was inaugurated with Mr. Chamberlain as president and Mr. H. H. Fowler

(afterwards Lord Wolverhampton) among the vice-presidents; and Mr. Gladstone on the occasion of his visit, described in the previous chapter, gave it his countenance and support. At the first meeting of the General Committee, on July 2, Mr. Schnadhorst was appointed secretary.

The Birmingham Association had been hotly denounced as an odious tyranny, and when the Federation was formed with the aim of being, in its president's words, 'a Liberal Parliament outside the Imperial Legislature,' the alarm of cautious Whigs and hostile Tories was increased. Lord Hartington, on being asked to give it his official blessing, demurred on the ground that it represented only one section of the party. Its legality was questioned in the House of Commons. Sir George Bowyer inquired if it came under the Act of George III, for the effectual repression of societies established for seditious and treasonable purposes. Mr. Chamberlain retorted with a counter question as to the National Union of Conservative Associations, which had been founded on a somewhat similar plan. The Attorney-General replied that as at present constituted the Federation did not come within the Act, but, by way of favourable contrast to it, he mentioned that Mr. Gorst (afterwards Sir John Gorst), the honorary secretary of the National Union, had assured him that the Conservative organization was established, not to overturn, but to maintain the laws and constitution of the Kingdom!

Dislike of the strange monster was strengthened by the part it played in the agitation on the Eastern Question. For three years its operations were mainly directed against the foreign policy of Lord Beaconsfield's Government. Numerous resolutions were adopted and circulars issued by the Committee with the view of educating and formulating public opinion, and on a single day at the beginning of 1878, in response to a suggestion from headquarters, 127 meetings 'of weight and influence' were held throughout the country with a common object. Seeing that the officers were Birmingham citizens and that Mr. Chamberlain was the president, that ambitious man was able to control the 'machine' and to exercise great influence on public opinion and to bring it to bear effectively on party leaders.

Lord Beaconsfield sneered at the new organization as a Caucus. The word was imported from the vocabulary of United States politics, where it indicated a local meeting of the voters of a party to choose candidates for local offices or to nominate delegates to a convention, but although its American origin¹ was brought up against it in disparagement its champion was undisturbed, and he was inclined,

¹ 'This day found that the Caucus Club meets at certain times in the yard of Tom Dawes, adjutant of the Boston (Militia) Regiment.'—Diary of John Adams, 1753.

indeed, as he said, to take the sneer as a compliment. Mr. Chamberlain defended the Caucus in the *Fortnightly Review* of July, 1877, and November, 1878, explaining that what was sought was not a change of leaders, but the expression of such an amount of public opinion as would encourage them to move a little quicker and a little farther. Looking forward a few years we find him describing it as absolutely representative, whereas in the Conservative copy the body was there but not the soul. 'The Primrose League,' he said, when it was formed in 1883, 'is more in the Tory way, with its silly, sentimental title.' But he lived to be the hero of the League.

* * * * *

The most piquant and memorable incident of Mr. Chamberlain's early years in Parliament was his repudiation of the leadership of Lord Hartington, who confessed nearly a quarter of a century later that his position as an old Whig between Mr. Gladstone and 'the new and aspiring Radical leader,' was not always a happy one. Rebellious words used by the member for Birmingham were quoted on innumerable occasions by Conservatives when the two statesmen sat in the same Liberal Cabinet, and by Liberals with equal iteration when they acted still more closely together in a Unionist Administration. In one respect his impression of the controversy which provoked the outburst differed from that of his friends. While they regarded him as among the pioneers of obstruction in consequence of his conduct on this occasion, he asserted after becoming 'a reformed character' that he never obstructed.

It was on the Army Discipline Bill of 1879 that the incident occurred. One of the severest, most determined contests ever fought in the Parliamentary arena took place on the question of flogging in the army. Mr. Chamberlain denounced the practice as degrading, debasing, and unworthy of our civilization; he contended that it was injurious to discipline and prevented the best men from going into the ranks. In a protracted resistance to the system he was associated with Mr. Parnell and other Irish Nationalists as well as with a number of Radicals. On June 17 he admitted 'it might be said' that their proceedings amounted to obstruction but he thought persistent opposition was justified by the persistent obstinacy of the Government. A speech in which he showed a large number of offences for which flogging was liable to be administered produced a grave impression even on the Conservatives, and Colonel Stanley, the War Minister, expressed his readiness to limit the class of crimes in this category. Two days later Mr. Parnell and others pressed for total abolition. Sir William Harcourt advised them to give way on account of the concessions obtained, but Mr. Chamberlain, while professing, perhaps ironically, the readiness of members below the gangway to

receive Sir William's advice at all times with respect, retorted that they could get nothing from the Government except by what was commonly called obstruction. The friends of humanity and the friends of the British army, he said, owed a debt of gratitude to his honourable friend, Mr. Parnell, for standing up alone against this system when others had not the courage of their convictions, and Mr. Justin McCarthy has stated that Mr. Chamberlain privately spoke to him with great admiration of that remarkable man and his tactics.

'What was commonly called obstruction' was resumed in the beginning of July, and opponents of flogging insisted on specimens of the 'cat' being exhibited. There was a prolonged sitting on the subject on July 3; the House met on Saturday, the 5th, to deal with it and did not adjourn till Sunday morning; and when Irishmen were charged with obstruction their Birmingham friend declared that English representatives were prepared to take the same course.

Lord Hartington at the renewal of the controversy on the following Monday had, as he told Lord Granville, 'a row with Chamberlain and the Radicals.' After the discussion had lasted for several hours, Mr. Hopwood, one of the latter, incidentally referred to him as their leader. Declining this title, he warmly declared that the course which Mr. Hopwood and those acting with him were taking was ill-advised, and extremely prejudicial to the dignity of Parliament. Thereupon came Mr. Chamberlain's repudiation. 'The noble lord,' he said in his icy manner, 'had not unfortunately been in the House during a great portion of the discussion—a thing which had been very much noticed on previous occasions. It was rather inconvenient that they should have so little of the presence of the noble lord, *lately the leader of the Opposition, but now the leader of a section only.*' Every phrase in this utterance must have been galling to the statesman who had reluctantly undertaken a thankless task, and the deepest insult was given by the final taunt. It was among the things which would have been better left unsaid; but that Mr. Chamberlain ever wished it unsaid there is no proof. Mr. Fawcett, an independent Radical who although he had lost his sight acquired an influential position in Parliament, rushed to Lord Hartington's defence and undertook still to follow him. The obstructives, however, continued their practices.

There was a curious sequel to the incident. Eight days later the Whig statesman threw in his lot with the Radicals. It had become apparent that the Government had no clear conviction in their own minds of the indispensable necessity of the punishment which was so strongly opposed, and in these circumstances he stated that he did not feel obliged any longer to support them. Naturally, Mr.

Chamberlain heard the announcement to this effect with 'much pleasure and gratification,' and once more with characteristic readiness to follow a chief who took the direction from himself he recognized Lord Hartington as 'the leader of the Opposition.' When the noble lord himself, with Mr. Gladstone's approval, moved an amendment against the permanent retention of corporal punishment for military offences, Mr. Charles Russell, afterwards the Lord Chief Justice, congratulated Mr. Chamberlain on 'his great triumph,' and Mr. Chaplin scornfully attributed the Liberal leader's conversion to the fact that the chief of the Caucus had gone down to Birmingham, and set to work all his wires and all the resources of his American organization. Mr. *Punch*, who described him and his friends as English *intransigents*, did 'not like to see the tail of the Opposition wagging its head in this way.'

The abolition of flogging, which was not long delayed, was justified by the results, and some of those who had defended the practice lived to recognize that a public service was done by the obstructive Radicals and their Irish friends. As for Mr. Chamberlain, however much his views on other subjects changed, he never modified his detestation of this form of punishment, and when he was Secretary of State twenty years later he stopped it in Crown Colonies. There was no malice in his reference to Lord Hartington. He had stated in 1877, even when he did not see eye to eye with the Whig statesman on the Eastern Question, that 'with the exception of Mr. Gladstone there is no Liberal leader who would command as much confidence and support as Lord Hartington has secured,' and he never showed a preference for any substitute. After their passing disagreement he joined with other members of the party in inviting him to a banquet in honour of his services to the Opposition.

At almost all points of Conservative policy Mr. Chamberlain was a very severe and bitter critic. Parliament having been summoned in December, 1878, on account of the military expedition to Afghanistan, he made a sharp attack on the Government and complained of a deliberate attempt to substitute might for right in dealing with Indian princes. 'What,' he asked, 'of our scrupulous good faith? What of our prestige in India? These we are willing to throw away in pursuit of the hazy phantom of a scientific frontier!' The war with the Zulus also provoked his strongest censures, and in an impassioned passage he asked where was the policy of annexation to stop. He sneered at the new Imperialism, and declared that 'unless this spirit were, either by Parliament or by the people at large, severely and sternly repressed there could hardly be a limit to the responsibilities which might be fastened upon us, and none to the difficulties and even the disasters yet in store for this country.' Annexation of territory and increase of responsibility were dreaded by a member

who, in later years, described those who inherited his views as Little Englanders.

As the Beaconsfield Administration drew near its doom his invective did not grow milder nor did the rebukes of his own censors abate in severity. In 1879 he called on its chief to appeal once more 'to the country he had betrayed, the tax-payers whose burdens he had increased, and the working classes whose industry he had paralysed.' While Lord Hartington enjoyed the commendation of the Ministerial organs for his moderation, violence was attributed to Mr. Chamberlain. *The Times* charged him with passing the bounds of decent political warfare. 'We feel for our part ashamed,' it said, 'that any English politician who holds a respectable position should condescend to this kind of Billingsgate.' Mr. Chamberlain was, however, incorrigible. He suggested the following epitaph for the expiring Government :—

Here lies a Tory Ministry
Whose word no man relies on ;
Who never said the thing they meant,
And never did a wise one.¹

'The bogey of Toryism,' was his character at the close of his first Parliament. Sir William Harcourt who visited the Midland capital as his guest in January, 1880, said in the course of a speech : 'I remember the time when the senior member for Birmingham was the great bogey of the Tory party, but those heretics had the habit both of burning what they adored and of adoring what they burnt, and accordingly Mr. Bright had been deposed from the high rank of a destructive spirit to the inferior grade of guardian angel, and by a sort of apostolic succession Mr. Chamberlain had been consecrated the arch-bogey of Toryism.' In the same strain he referred to his host as 'this dragon of Birmingham by terror of whose name Tory mothers keep their infants in order.' Sir William himself and Mr. Chamberlain had not always agreed in Opposition, but a feeling of personal esteem which survived many political storms was sown in fertile ground—for both men were capable of abiding friendship. 'I have spent,' said the visitor, 'twenty-four hours under the dragon's roof, and I am prepared to prove that he partakes of the qualities of ordinary human nature. He eats, drinks, sleeps like other mortals, and I have not yet been able to detect the cloven hoof.' Not yet !

¹ A parody on the lines written by the Earl of Rochester on the bed-chamber door of Charles II :—

Here lies our sovereign lord the king,
Whose word no man relies on ;
He never says a foolish thing,
Nor ever does a wise one.

VIII

LIBERAL MINISTER AND 'PRO-BOER'

IN less than four years from the time that he entered the House of Commons Mr. Chamberlain was a Cabinet Minister seated on the Treasury bench in the company of statesmen who had felt the lash of his tongue. Parliament was dissolved in March, 1880. If Mr. Gladstone was the inspirer of the Liberal victory which swept Disraeli forever from power, Mr. Chamberlain was its organizer. For the success of the party a large share of the credit was claimed on behalf of his Caucus. It existed in sixty-seven of the boroughs in which contests occurred, and in sixty of these Liberal seats were gained or retained. Also in all of the ten county constituencies in which it had been established and where contests took place the Liberals won seats. Politicians who had sneered at it were not ashamed to profit by the new organization. The Parliament returned with the impetus of the Midlothian campaign was, according to Bright, the best that had ever been elected. Unexpected events sadly marred its achievements, but it opened its career with the very best intentions under the glamour of the great statesman who had been called by the unmistakable voice of the country to buckle on again his 'well-dinted armour.'

Queen Victoria reluctantly accepted the advice of Lord Hartington and Lord Granville, and commissioned Mr. Gladstone to form a Government. He received the promise of the co-operation of the two statesmen who had led the party in Opposition and at once named Lord Selborne and Mr. Childers also for high offices. The Duke of Argyll, Sir William Harcourt, Lord Kimberley, Mr. Bright and Mr. Forster were quickly added. But what of the Radicals? When the list came out, and the name neither of Sir Charles Dilke nor of Mr. Chamberlain was found, the advanced politicians who had done so much for victory were bitterly disappointed. Birmingham Liberals were specially annoyed. It was rumoured, and the rumour has been confirmed, that Mr. Gladstone was reluctant to call any of the new Radicals to Downing Street. When at last he responded to the representations of friends and sent for Sir Charles Dilke, he learned that the baronet and Mr. Chamberlain had agreed not to join the Government unless the one or the other received a post of Cabinet

rank. Yielding to the inevitable, he gave the preference to the member for Birmingham, who became President of the Board of Trade, while his friend and ally was appointed Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. 'Your political opinions,' wrote the Prime Minister to Mr. Chamberlain, 'may on some points go rather beyond what I may call the general measure of the Government, but I hope and believe that there can be no practical impediment on this score to your acceptance of my proposal.'¹

As the new Minister told his constituents, he accepted the office which Mr. Gladstone graciously offered him, not without some hesitation, both because he distrusted his own qualifications after so short an experience of Parliamentary life, and also because he could not surrender without regret that full independence which he had enjoyed as a private member. It was only now that he finally severed his connection with the Birmingham Town Council by resigning his seat as an alderman. He was still proud of his parochial interests. 'I will confess to you,' he said, in one of those sonorous passages which impress the memory, 'that I am so parochially-minded that I look with greater satisfaction to our annexation of the gas and water, to our scientific frontier in the improvement area, than I do to the result of that imperial policy which has given us Cyprus and the Transvaal; and I am prouder of having been engaged with you in warring against ignorance and disease and crime in Birmingham than if I had been the author of the Zulu War and had instigated the invasion of Afghanistan.'

Surprise and doubt were expressed in some quarters on account of the selection of Mr. Chamberlain instead of his friend for a post within the Cabinet—a preference which may have been influenced by the aggressive manner in which Sir Charles Dilke had advocated Republicanism. *The Times* remarked that the member for Birmingham was not the most conspicuous of the advanced Liberals. 'In Parliamentary experience and reputation he is scarcely the equal of either Mr. Fawcett or Sir Charles Dilke.' At the same time it admitted 'he has shown a vigorous grasp of affairs and considerable power in debate. Moreover, he is the Carnot of the hour, the organizer of Liberal victory.' *The Standard* also said that the country would not altogether endorse the preference shown for Mr. Chamberlain, as compared with Sir Charles Dilke, and sneeringly remarked that the author of the Caucus in England had obtained his reward. 'These Radical gentlemen'—the Conservative organ went on to observe—'who now find themselves for the first time in Downing Street or thereabouts will discover before long that they have a good deal to learn and not a little to forget. We are not altogether sorry that

¹ *Life of Gladstone*, by John Morley.

they are there, and that their political education, in the higher sense of the word, is thus about to commence.' The *Daily News* expressed Liberal opinion on the appointment without any fervour: 'Mr. Chamberlain has not indeed had long Parliamentary experience, but he has what may be called the political instinct to a remarkable degree; he has made good use of his time in Parliament, and he is the recognized representative of a new political school in one part of England.' The limitation to 'one part of England' was not at all generous.

The superior claims of Sir Charles Dilke were frankly recognized by Mr. Chamberlain. He had thought, as he told his constituents, that if representatives were chosen to sit in the Cabinet of what was sometimes called the advanced section of the Liberal party, the choice would fall elsewhere than on himself. 'There was one of his political friends, one of his dearest political friends, who was designated by public rumour—he meant Sir Charles Dilke—to whom he would most gladly have given place.' But, he added, when the offer was made to him he did not feel that it would be right for him to shrink from the responsibility, however great he felt it to be. The conduct of Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke on this occasion reflected credit on both. Their friendship was closer than that of political colleagues, as a rule, and it stood the test of many severe buffets. By their comradeship the strength of each was doubled in the Government. They were often in consultation and on many a night during the Parliament of 1880 they left the House together, conversing eagerly, and laying plans which, alas! went agley. In 1886 their paths were divided, and for many subsequent years they faced each other as political opponents, but their personal allusions were always of a kindly and considerate character.

Here, in May, 1880, was the Birmingham mayor on the Treasury bench—a very piquant personality—alert, resolute, clear-minded and ambitious, with the sharpest eyes in the world and a fine faculty for speech. Usually he sat near the Speaker's chair. John Bright often lounged at that part of the bench, but would now and again move up beside Mr. Gladstone, the spectacle of the two noble old heads and faces close together forming a most striking and memorable picture. It was a Government of remarkable men. Next to Mr. Gladstone, as a rule, were Lord Hartington and Sir William Harcourt, the Home Secretary. Lord Hartington was deputy leader and commanded the respect of all the Liberals. Although regarded as the chief of the Whig group in the Cabinet, his loyalty to the Prime Minister and services to the party were highly appreciated, and he was thoroughly trusted and liked. Sir William Harcourt was not taken quite seriously. In his old age politicians of

every section recognized his earnestness, but in the early 'eighties he gave the impression of a splendid place-man, more conspicuous for cleverness than for conviction. Mr. Childers sat as near Mr. Gladstone as possible, and often had a close companion in Mr. Forster, who as Irish Secretary was greatly badgered by the Nationalists, and who defended his policy with a dogged, animated energy which appealed to the House. His shaggy hair, which he tossed from his forehead in his vehemence, was characteristic of the demeanour of a man whose rough aspect concealed a humane disposition. Another interesting figure on the bench was that of Sir Henry James (afterwards Lord James of Hereford), the Attorney-General. Sir Henry, with deep political interests, exercised more influence than that of the average law officer and enjoyed in a considerable degree Mr. Gladstone's regard. The colleague for whom the chief showed the warmest feeling was Lord Frederick Cavendish, the Secretary to the Treasury, who in an ill-fated hour went to Dublin Castle. Lord Frederick's devotion to him was more than that of a political subordinate. It was characterized by a knightly chivalry.

The Cabinet of 1880 was a sort of coalition in which Whig was allied with Radical. Mr. Gladstone gave it equilibrium, now inclining to the one section, and now to the other. He had shown a preference for moderate men in forming the Government, but on several critical occasions during its existence he yielded to the influence of advanced opinion. The leaders of the rival sections differed as much in temperament as in ideas. Lord Salisbury wittily likened the Cabinet to an old Dutch clock: 'When it is going to be fine Lord Hartington appears, and when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain is seen you may look out for squalls.' The Radical, however, was not irreconcilable. Just as he had made a favourable impression on the royal visitors at Birmingham, and on the House of Commons when he first entered it, he won now the esteem of colleagues at Downing Street. Lord Selborne, the new Lord Chancellor, writing on the formation of the Government, described him as 'a personally agreeable man, of good countenance, manners and address.' He was helpful with his suggestive mind and faculty for business, and he recognized that in politics he could not get everything he wanted at once. Froude expressed the opinion of at least the majority of his associates when, in writing to Lady Derby, he said, 'I like Chamberlain. He knows his mind. There is no dust in his eyes and he throws no dust in the eyes of others.'¹

Transvaal troubles were among the earliest that afflicted the Government, and their change of policy within a year provided an opportunity for attack. Mr. Chamberlain was entrusted by the

¹ *Life of Froude*, by Herbert Paul.

Prime Minister with the duty of speaking for the defence, although the matter lay far outside his own department. According to Sir William Harcourt's recollection of the incident, given in 1900, a great honour was thus conferred upon one who was 'only lately a Cabinet Minister, in being selected to declare to Parliament what was the policy and what were the motives of the Cabinet.' In 1877 Mr. Chamberlain voted in the minority against the annexation of the Transvaal, and Mr. Gladstone's references to the subject in Midlothian, although brief, were sufficient to produce the impression that he also would, if he could, reverse the policy of his predecessors. Nevertheless, when the Liberals came into office, they decided that whatever might be thought of the original act of annexation they could not safely or wisely abandon the territory. Mr. Chamberlain, while defending this decision in debate in August, 1880, admitted that the House in authorizing the annexation acted on inaccurate information, inasmuch as the general belief was that the vast majority of the inhabitants were in favour of it, whereas subsequent proceedings proved conclusively that this was not the case.

Events, however, did not halt here, and the Government were soon hurried into another frame of mind. The Boers, disappointed by the Liberals in whom they had placed their hopes, broke into rebellion. A series of disasters to our troops culminated at Majuba Hill; and although our forces were soon declared to be in a position to overwhelm the Boers, it was decided to continue the negotiations which had been opened before the defeats took place, and the Transvaal speedily recovered its independence. Again Mr. Chamberlain's ingenuity was employed in debate to defend the new decision. On the former occasion attack came from Mr. Courtney, a champion of nationalities struggling to be free; now it proceeded from the Conservatives, who stood by their original policy.

The spirited and sympathetic speech in which the Radical Minister justified the magnanimity of the British Government was frequently quoted against him twenty years afterwards. He lived to describe the retrocession as 'a disastrous mistake,'¹ but at the time it was effected he commended it with an earnestness which undoubtedly sprang from conviction. Never had he been more eloquent or forcible. To maintain annexation was, he said in 1881, 'impossible for any Government caring for the honour as well as for the interests of this country. It was contrary to our treaty engagements; it was contrary to the best traditions of a free country.' His generous and glowing tribute to the virtues of the Boers formed the text of many diatribes in another Parliamentary generation by men who were his early friends but from whom he parted. 'Are they not virtues,' he asked,

¹ September 23, 1900.

'which we are proud to believe form the best characteristics of the English people? Is it against such a nation that we are to be called upon to exercise the dread arbitrament of arms?'

The defeat of a few hundred troops by greatly superior forces could not, in his opinion, be treated as a matter of national importance demanding necessarily the further sacrifice of human life. 'A great nation could afford to be generous.' This was a note he had struck at Birmingham. 'What,' said Mr. Chamberlain, 'is the use of being great and powerful if we are afraid to admit an error when we are conscious of it? Shame is not in the confession of a mistake. Shame lies only in persistency in wilful wrong-doing.' This opinion he repeated in debate on April, 1883. He protested against the idea that it was the duty of the Government to have continued the war, after they had determined to abandon the territory, for the purpose of revenge and to maintain our military prestige. 'It was, and it is our opinion,' he said, 'that that would have been an act of unparalleled wickedness.' Sir William Harcourt stated nearly twenty years later that Mr. Chamberlain was selected to speak for the Government on this subject because he was so earnest a believer in retrocession. He could not, in De Quincey's fine phrase, look 'behind the curtain of destiny.'

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IX

IRELAND AND EGYPT

ALMOST every step taken by the Ministry in the Parliament of 1880-85 was impeded by the two bold leaders below the Opposition gangway, whose political genius was equal to Mr. Chamberlain's and who excited an interest as great even as was aroused by the aspiring Radical. While Lord Randolph Churchill at the head of the Fourth Party devoted his brilliant talents to a constant effort to discredit and thwart the Liberal administration, Mr. Parnell did his utmost not only to destroy British rule in Ireland, but also to render Parliamentary government impossible at Westminster so long as Home Rule was denied to that country. There was now in the House of Commons a compact and independent party of Nationalists. They included several able debaters, eloquent speakers and untiring obstructives. Mr. Parnell's mastery over the party was complete. His manners were cold and reserved; with a slow, stiff utterance he could make a biting ferocious attack, but he was not an orator; he came and went mysteriously and was sometimes absent when a lead was urgently needed; yet his influence appeared unshakable. His followers might murmur at his absence and even venture in an emergency to take a line of their own; he would enter at the bar and push his way along the third bench to a seat near the gangway, scarcely glancing at the men around him; he would ascertain what had happened, and if necessary express his views in his precise, chilling phrases, with a rare and momentary flash of the fiercest passion; then colleagues who had been previously muttering against him applauded with unrestrained enthusiasm, and British members listened in a sort of angry, terrified silence.

A mysterious spell was cast over the whole House by this strange, masterful man. He seemed to wield an incalculable force. Mr. Gladstone was saddened by the outbursts of the Irish; Mr. Chamberlain was suspected of sympathy with their discontent; most of the other Ministers were filled either with despair or with resentment. Mr. Parnell's career came to a deplorable end with name sullied in the Divorce Court, with his leadership wrenched from his strong, hard-holding hands, with the reproaches of colleagues and allies in his dying ears. But in the early eighties he played the Parliamentary

game with a skilful and long-sighted, inflexible audacity which extorted a Home Rule policy from a great British party and excited the amazement and almost the awe of members on both sides.

While Ireland hampered and harried the Government, from the beginning to the end of its existence, Mr. Chamberlain was carried through many phases of emotion. The House of Lords added not a few drops to the cup of his wrath when it threw out in 1880 the Compensation for Disturbance Bill; and when Mr. Forster demanded that Parliament should be summoned at the end of the year to pass a measure of coercion he threatened to resign. His threat was partly responsible for the postponement of this process. In the session of 1881, which was mainly devoted to Irish affairs, the Government applied not only the lash of coercion but along with it a remedy for the ills of the distressed country in the shape of a great scheme of agrarian reform which provided for the fixing of fair rents by a commission, for the free sale of the tenants' interests in their holdings, and for security of tenure. Mr. Chamberlain felt no sorrow when the Duke of Argyll left the Government on account of the Land Bill. He was more gravely concerned by the Nationalist opposition to the other Irish measure, which authorized the Lord-Lieutenant to issue a warrant for the arrest of any person whom he might reasonably suspect of any treasonable or agrarian offence.

'I hate coercion,' said the Radical Minister, in one of those incisive and unmistakable passages which have been included among Parliamentary classics, and with which every political novice is familiar; 'I hate the name and I hate the thing.' 'I am bound to say,' he continued, 'that I believe there is not one of my colleagues who does not hate it as I do.' 'But then,' he added, in order to justify his support of the obnoxious bill, 'we hate disorder more.' Ordinary Parliamentary rules were unable to overcome the obstruction with which it was resisted, and debate on the first reading was closed by the arbitrary action of Speaker Brand, who terminated a sitting which lasted two days and two nights by rising, and on his own authority, putting the question to the vote. Even the Land Act, carried by Mr. Gladstone, when accompanied by coercion, failed to conciliate the Nationalists, and for a time at least Mr. Chamberlain was constrained to point out that their object was not the same as his. 'We want,' he said, 'to remove every just cause of grievance; *they* want to magnify grievances, and to intensify differences.' Still he laboured in and out of the Cabinet, while supporting the cause of order, to promote sympathy and to arrange a settlement between the two countries.

The arrest of Mr. Parnell and several colleagues as 'suspects' in October, 1881, rendered his position more embarrassing. The legislation of the year had been followed in Ireland by a no-rent agitation

and a system of terrorism which included moonlighting and boycotting. Mr. Gladstone sent resounding from Leeds the phrase that 'the resources of civilization against its enemies are not yet exhausted,' and a few days later the kingdom was startled by the news that Mr. Parnell had been sent to Kilmainham prison. It had become necessary, as Mr. Chamberlain explained, to put the Irish leader and some of his friends in jail to prevent them from interrupting the operation of the Land Act. At the same time the Land League, with which the Nationalists controlled agrarian Ireland, was proclaimed as an illegal and criminal association. While acquiescing, as a member of the Government, in these proceedings the Radical Minister alarmed the Conservatives by a speech which he delivered at Liverpool. His opponents had complained that the League was not suppressed sooner. 'Its original objects,' replied Mr. Chamberlain, 'were legal, and were even praiseworthy, and to stifle agitation at such a time would have been to have prevented reform.' His dislike of coercion was again expressed in a manner displeasing to the Opposition. 'With the Tories,' he bluntly asserted, 'coercion is a policy; with us it is only a hateful incident.' Yet his attempts to unite conciliation with coercion satisfied nobody. At the beginning of the next Session he was attacked both by Conservatives and by Nationalists. By the former he was roundly abused for his Liverpool speech, which was regarded as a palliation of crime. By the latter he was reproached for his connivance in coercion. 'We have honestly endeavoured,' he pleaded, 'to do our duty and to steer an even course between extremes.' In the troubled sea of politics an even course is hard to keep. Sir Richard Cross described Mr. Chamberlain as the evil genius of the Cabinet in Irish policy, and before long that vigilant Conservative was convinced that his suspicion was justified.

A demand for the recall of Mr. Forster from the Irish Secretaryship was made with persistency early in 1882 by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which was then, under the editorship of Mr. Morley, exercising a powerful influence on the Liberal side. Although the Radical Minister, when challenged on the subject of the articles in the House of Commons, described the editor as one of the most independent men in the kingdom the *Pall Mall* was regarded by Mr. Forster's friends as the organ of opinions which had either been suggested or would be adopted by Mr. Chamberlain. In these circumstances high significance was naturally given to such a passage as the following: 'Lord Hartington was not the ideal Chief Secretary,¹ but his hard, grave sense is much nearer the mark of what is wanted than any quantity of dishevelled sentimentalism. As for sympathy with the population of Ireland, what is wanted is not sentimental sympathy, but an eye for the forces in

¹ Lord Hartington was Chief Secretary from 1871 to 1874.

Ireland out of which we may hope to build up an ordered government.' The arrest of the Nationalist leaders had failed to check the agrarian movement and it had become painfully clear that Mr. Forster was not the man to bring peace to the disturbed country. Mr. Gladstone said of him, when all his struggles in this mortal scene were over, 'He was a man upon whom there could be no doubt that Nature had laid her hand for the purpose of forming a thoroughly genuine and independent character.' His qualities, however, were not those of tact and conciliation. His 'dishevelled sentimentalism' was spurned by the leaders of the people to whom sympathy, accompanied by coercion, was offered, and statesmen were dismayed by the fear of another year of disorder in Ireland and turmoil in the House of Commons. A new departure was decided upon. Another effort of conciliation was made in response to an overture from Kilmainham.

The struggle between the member for Birmingham and Mr. Forster reached a dramatic stage when Mr. Parnell was released in May and the Chief Secretary resigned his post. Mr. Forster's biographer has attributed Mr. Chamberlain's conduct mainly to personal dislike. He says the followers of the Birmingham statesman were naturally anxious that their hero should arrive at the summit of his ambition, and Mr. Forster was the man who stood most directly in his path. The discovery that the Irish Secretary had at that time any prospect of succeeding to the Liberal leadership was probably confined to Sir Wemyss Reid, but undoubtedly many politicians believed that he had been the victim of an intrigue in the Cabinet, and the Conservatives rallied to the cry. He became their hero when he explained that he refused to share the responsibility for the release of the imprisoned members. 'I believe their release,' he said, 'will tend to the encouragement of crime.' This was truly a damning statement to come from the Minister who had been responsible for the government of Ireland, and it caused a profound impression.

Suspicion of a political compact was whispered in club and corridor. Mr. Gladstone denied that there was any arrangement between Mr. Parnell and the Government, and when the liberated leader, from his place in the House, read the letter which he wrote in Kilmainham to Captain O'Shea, the Irish Liberal who had been the go-between and which formed the justification of his release, no allusion was found to a party understanding. It merely sketched a general political programme. Mr. Parnell wrote that if the arrears question were settled on satisfactory lines he and his colleagues had every confidence that the exertions they would be able to make 'would be effective in stopping outrages and intimidation of all kinds.' This, however, although suggestive enough, was not all. From the corner of the second Liberal bench, to which Mr. Forster had retired, the

ex-Secretary kept hostile watch on the proceedings of his colleagues. When he asked if the member for Cork had read the whole letter the Conservatives sprang into an expectant attitude, and the Liberals looked uneasily at their chief. Mr. Parnell explained that the copy which he read had been furnished to him by Captain O'Shea. 'I have not the document with me,' pleaded the Captain, but escape was impossible. Mr. Forster handed to him a copy of the letter with a brusque request to 'read the last paragraph.' When he complied with the request the excited House learned that the Irish leader wrote in prison that the accomplishment of the programme he had sketched would enable the Nationalists to 'co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal party in forwarding Liberal principles.' This party contract, and the circumstances of its omission, excited great prejudice, and the 'Kilmainham treaty,' which Mr. Forster vehemently denounced as a disgraceful compromise, inflicted permanent injury on the reputation of the Government.

Although in a Cabinet of thirteen persons, twelve (as was authoritatively stated) were in favour of release, Mr. Chamberlain was held chiefly responsible for Mr. Forster's downfall. Mr. Justin McCarthy has stated in *British Political Leaders* that the whole arrangements of the treaty were conducted between the member for Birmingham and Mr. Parnell; and for his share in the negotiations, whatever it may have been, the Radical Minister offered no apology and felt no repentance. On the contrary he boasted of what had been done. In a discussion raised by Mr. Balfour, who said the transaction stood alone in history in its infamy, Mr. Chamberlain defended the liberation of the prisoners on the ground that it would contribute to the peace of Ireland. It was, he held, the duty of the Government to seek Irish opinion wherever they could find it. 'And I cannot help thinking,' he added, 'we should have done better in the past if we had sought it more frequently.'¹

Charges of intrigue were persistently brought against Mr. Chamberlain by the Conservatives and these were repeated by the Nationalists after his own quarrel with them. In *The Life of Charles Stewart Parnell*, Mr. Barry O'Brien says: 'The Irish Secretary seems to have been quite sympathetic on the question of arrears, but . . . he would not bargain with the Irish leader. He would not allow himself to be undermined by Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Morley. He looked

¹ In a letter to Captain O'Shea during the Kilmainham negotiations Mr. Chamberlain wrote: 'I entirely agree in your view that it is the duty of the Government to lose no opportunity of acquainting themselves with representative opinion in Ireland, and for that purpose that we ought to welcome suggestion and criticism from every quarter, and from all sections and classes of Irishmen, provided that they are animated by a desire for good government, and not a blind hatred of all government whatever.'

upon the whole business as an underhand proceeding, quite in keeping with the attempts which had been constantly made to thwart him in his Irish administration, and he resolved to take no part in negotiations which had been begun over his head.' It was, said Lord Cowper, who had been lord-lieutenant, the way the thing was done, rather than the thing itself, to which he objected. When Mr. James Lowther, however, stated in Yorkshire that Mr. Forster had disloyal colleagues who conducted clandestine proceedings the ex-Secretary chivalrously contradicted the statement, and declared that he was cognisant of the negotiations. On the subject being debated at the beginning of the session of 1883, Mr. Chamberlain was fiercely attacked by Mr. Gibson (Lord Ashbourne) and other Conservatives with whom he subsequently sat in Lord Salisbury's Cabinet. Sir Herbert Maxwell, a future fiscal friend, accused him of making 'profligate promises', Mr. Chaplin charged him with a 'very foolish and painful proceeding', and Lord George Hamilton, who it is to be hoped had forgotten *Oliver Twist*, went so far in political animosity as to say that he suggested the character of the Artful Dodger.

Other expressions were used which showed that in his Radical days Mr. Chamberlain was regarded by the Conservatives with feelings of rancour not usually excited by politicians. He assured the House that any communications addressed to him with reference to the Kilmainham transaction were instantly made known to Mr. Forster. Nevertheless, the insinuations and charges against him were frequently renewed. At the close of 1883 Mr. Gorst, referring to the period of the Kilmainham treaty, expressed the belief that there existed a sort of inner circle within the Cabinet, very much in the same way as an inner circle of Invincibles existed within the Land League, and that the inner circle of the Cabinet also had its Number One. ('Number One' of the Invincibles was supposed to be the chief director of intimidation.) A similar idea was expressed by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, who found two currents in the Government—one which wished to exercise all the powers of the law for the repression of crime, and was represented by Lord Hartington, and the other which looked to the agencies of outrage as useful allies in passing Liberal measures.

On Mr. Forster's retirement Mr. Chamberlain would have accepted the Chief Secretaryship. The leading members of the Irish party were sounded and were in favour of his appointment. The post was, however, given to Lord Frederick Cavendish, while Earl Spencer, who was to be the principal ruler at Dublin Castle, succeeded Earl Cowper as Viceroy. Lord Frederick was appointed on May 4, and two days later he and Mr. Burke, the permanent Under-Secretary, were assassinated in Phoenix Park, Dublin. 'One of the very noblest hearts in England,' said the Prime Minister, 'has ceased to beat at

the very moment when it was devoted to the service of Ireland.' The assassination excited a thrill of horror in every class and party. It was regarded, by Conservatives at least, as a sequel to the clemency shown by the Government, although evidence proved that the assassins had originally intended to take Mr. Forster's life and were unfamiliar with Lord Frederick Cavendish. On the day after the hideous event Mr. Parnell and Mr. McCarthy visited Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Chamberlain in order to express their horror at a tragedy which would retard the Irish cause, and Mr. McCarthy has recorded that he was greatly impressed by the firmness with which the member for Birmingham declared that nothing which had happened would prevent him from accepting the office of Chief Secretary if the opportunity were offered to him. The opportunity did not even now occur. Sir Charles Dilke was offered the difficult, if not dangerous post, but declined it because it was not accompanied by a seat in the Cabinet and he would have had to advocate a policy for which he was not responsible, and thereupon Sir George Trevelyan took Lord Frederick Cavendish's place. It has been suggested by Lord Eversley, who was a member of the Government, that Lord Spencer may have been unwilling to have as Chief Secretary one who was so masterful as Mr. Chamberlain.¹

The policy of the Government, at Mr. Parnell's release, was to settle the question of arrears, and to arm the Executive with greater powers for the prevention of crime. The Phoenix Park murders altered 'only the order' of their proceedings. Promptly on May 11, Sir William Harcourt introduced the Prevention of Crimes Bill, by which trial by jury was suspended in certain districts, and a power of search was granted. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, steady in the cause of liberty, remarked that when it became law 'Ireland would be under an iron hand indeed.' The Arrears Bill was in the sympathetic charge of Mr. Gladstone himself, and was in turn attacked by the Conservatives, Sir Herbert Maxwell dropping into poetry to express their view :—

You may twist, you may alter, this Act as you will ;
The taint of the Land League will hang to it still.

Credit to the Government for restoring peace and order was claimed by Mr. Chamberlain at the beginning of 1883. He said that success was due to the fact that while they had firmly administered the law they had also recognized the substantial grievances of the Irish people, and had made extraordinary efforts to remove those grievances. He was too sanguine. The Irish were neither grateful nor peaceful. Their spirit may be gauged by a speech delivered by Mr. Parnell, who found it impossible to pursue a pacific policy in view of fresh coercion. Alluding to the Crimes Bill, and looking at Mr. Forster,

¹ *Gladstone and Ireland*, by Lord Eversley.

who lounged heavily in a corner seat, he exclaimed with the most intense bitterness : ' It would be better to have the Act administered by the seasoned politician who is now in disgrace. . . . Call him back to his post. Send him to help Lord Spencer in the congenial work of the gallows in Ireland. Send him to look after the secret inquisitions of Dublin Castle. Send him to levy the payment of blood-money. Send him to raise the taxes, which an unfortunate and starving peasantry have to pay for crimes not committed by them.' Any one who listened to these words, and who noted their effect on the House, might have learned how a speaker without eloquence could produce an impression rarely attained by the finest orator. Liberals and Conservatives shuddered, while the Nationalists cheered wildly ; Mr. Gladstone was grieved and angry ; Mr. Forster glared at his assailant with a dour, dogged countenance. If the words hurt him he concealed his pain. His chief expression was that of scorn.

II

' The only Jingo in the Cabinet ! ' Thus Mr. Chamberlain was described even in his most Radical days by Mr. Bright, who knew him better than the general public ; and Lord Granville, informing Lord Spencer in June, 1882, that there had been several Cabinets about Egypt, noted : ' Bright of course the most peaceable, Chamberlain almost the greatest Jingo.'¹ The Radical leader's political education, in the higher sense of the word, as the *Standard* put it, was promoted when he came to deal practically with British interests abroad. Egypt kept step with Ireland in harassing the well-intentioned Government, and on a very delicate and difficult theme he was several times selected to expound the Ministerial policy. Notwithstanding his vision of the weary Titan staggering under ' the too vast orb of her fate ' and his animated protests against the extension of our responsibilities, he acquiesced in the steps taken with the object of restoring order in Egypt and maintaining the safety of the Suez Canal, which had been threatened by the movement of Arabi Pacha ; and he parted company with his colleague, John Bright, when the veteran resigned office on account of the decision to send troops to Egypt and the bombardment of Alexandria by our fleet.

An example of how to resign without rancour was given by Mr. Bright. In a few dignified sentences he explained that he had withdrawn from the Government because he thought there had been a manifest violation both of international and of moral law. This was severe enough opinion, but he offered it modestly, without any claim to special righteousness. Mr. Gladstone, glancing at the old friend

¹ *Life of Lord Granville*, by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice.

who had gone once more below the gangway, and speaking in a tone of affectionate remonstrance, remarked that the difference between them was a difference as to the particular application of the divine law in this particular case. Mr. Bright's resignation was to the Government, as it was to himself, the occasion of the profoundest pain, but the Prime Minister assured him that he carried with him in his retirement 'the unbroken esteem of his colleagues.' This was the last time the two orators were associated together in office. Mr. Bright lived long enough to assist in defeating Mr. Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill, but in the interval he spoke several times from his independent corner in support of his old chief and colleagues.

The budding Jingoism of Mr. Chamberlain came out in discussion on the military operations on July 25, 1882. The Radical leader explained that the cause of our intervention was the danger of anarchy. 'Anarchy in Egypt,' he argued, 'would affect British interests of paramount importance, and I would say the interests of civilization generally.' This was a new note. He struck it lightly and incidentally now, although later in his life it swelled into a great theme. Mr. Justin McCarthy, who kept watch on Radical developments, remarked that he had talked in a strain with which they were a little more familiar in the days of Lord Beaconsfield. Liberal peace-makers also were startled. Sir Wilfrid Lawson, for instance, twitted the people of Birmingham on shouting peace with Bright, and glory and gunpowder with Chamberlain. Mr. Gladstone detected the tendency of his Radical colleague's mind. In a letter to the Queen, dated December 18, which has been quoted by Mr. Morley, he noted that his leanings on foreign policy would be far more acceptable to Her Majesty than those of Mr. Bright.

Mr. Chamberlain himself, however, seemed unconscious of the direction in which he was travelling. At a meeting of the National Liberal Federation in the month in which the Prime Minister assured the Queen as to his 'leanings' he still repeated doctrines which, in later days, he would have described as Little Englandism. It was not necessary, he said, that he should waste time in repudiating again the idea of annexation, or of a protectorate, or even of an indefinite supervision of the Egyptian government such as found favour in some quarters. 'We think our possessions,' he added, 'are sufficiently ample, our duties and responsibilities too onerous and complicated'; and he dreaded the creation of a new Ireland for ourselves in the East. Events proved stronger than phrases. Although the alternate 'slumber and rush' of the Government in Egyptian and Soudanese matters, and particularly the delay of measures for the relief of General Gordon at Khartoum, alienated large masses of the people, Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues laid the foundation of the present system. Looking back

from 1890, Mr. Chamberlain candidly reviewed the course of events. 'I admit,' he said, 'I was one of those—I think my views were shared by the whole Cabinet of Mr. Gladstone—who regretted the necessity for the occupation of Egypt. I thought that England had so much to do, such enormous obligations and responsibilities, that we might well escape if we could this addition to them ; and when the occupation was forced upon us I looked forward with anxiety to an early, it might be even to an immediate evacuation.' In his Imperialist days, having seen the results of the occupation, he changed his mind.

X

REFORMER AND FREE TRADER

AT the Board of Trade Mr. Chamberlain found the work congenial and he took, as he said, 'an ever fresh interest in the many fresh subjects' with which he was brought into close acquaintance. The Irish Office with its notoriety and its opportunities appealed to him in 1882, and if he had obtained it, much besides his own career might have been different; but although the post which he held throughout the whole of Mr. Gladstone's second Administration did not by any means absorb all his thoughts and energies, he made the most of it. He was the business head of a business department, to which he attended as diligently as if it were his own factory, personally studying all important matters for which he was responsible. Permanent officials like a strong, though not a meddling Parliamentary chief, and Mr. Chamberlain's qualities were properly appreciated, while he himself, then, as always, proved a good friend to able and faithful subordinates. Business men also were pleased to deal with him, for they admired his directness and vigour. He was celebrated for his handling of deputations, getting quickly to the point and keeping attention to it.

For the fiscal policy of the country, on which he subsequently changed his course, he bore special responsibility as President of the Board of Trade. His speeches during the years that he occupied that office formed as effective a defence of the existing system as has ever been given. The officials supplied him with the facts of the controversy, and they were surprised by his quick mastery of them, and by the vivid manner in which he presented the arguments. He exposed the fallacy of the new doctrines of Fair Trade and Reciprocity, challenging their advocates to point out any distinction between the policy they called by these names and 'what the rest of the world consented to call Protection'; he ridiculed those who were alarmed by the excess of imports over exports and said he regarded this, not as a proof of our commercial decline, but as a fact which ought to give us the greatest satisfaction. 'What,' he asked, 'does this balance represent?' His answer was turned against himself on many a platform in a new century. 'In the first instance,' he said, 'it represents the cost of freight, the carrying trade of the world and especially of English

goods having passed almost entirely into English hands. But over and above this item it represents nothing more nor less than the profit derived by this country from its external trade and the interests from its investments abroad during forty years.' Mr. Chamberlain, when at the Board of Trade, disposed light-heartedly of the gentlemen (among whom he was afterwards numbered) 'who fume and fret whenever the value of what we receive is greater than the value of what we give.' 'Is any one,' he demanded, 'bold enough to propose that we should put duties upon food?' He did not foresee that he himself would be bold enough to propose 'these strange remedies,' for then he contended that a tax on food would mean a decline in wages: it would certainly involve a reduction in their productive value; it would raise the price of every article produced in the United Kingdom, and it would indubitably bring about the loss of that gigantic export trade which the industry and energy of the country, working under conditions of absolute freedom, had been able to create.

It may be said that even in the early eighties a shadow of doubt now and again crossed Mr. Chamberlain's mind. There were qualifying parentheses in his most strongly-worded speeches, as for instance: 'I do not like to speak dogmatically.' Nevertheless, on the main issue he continued to hold unflinchingly to the doctrines of Cobden. He made sport of those who argued that we had not 'real' Free Trade, and he ridiculed the idea, which he subsequently adopted, that Protection is a question of intention. 'One-sided Free Trade,' later so keenly denounced, he then held to be absolutely the very best for this country, and when a Sunday paper sneered at Cobden as the author of a number of predictions which had been falsified by events he retorted that nearly nineteen centuries had passed and still the doctrines of the Christian religion had not received universal acceptance. While he was a Liberal Minister he extolled cheap imports and pointed to trades that were dependent upon the access which the manufacturers had to every market in the world for the supply of the raw material.

No modern champion of Cobdenism has given a more moving picture of the effects of Protection than was painted in the eloquent words of Mr. Chamberlain, when he showed how it 'starved the poor,' and how the country 'was brought by it to the brink of revolution.' He recalled the description which was given in the following verses by the Corn Law rhymers of the sufferings endured by the people, and of the burning indignation which these sufferings called forth:—

They murder'd Hope, they fettered Trade,
The clouds to blood, the sun to shade,
And every good that God had made
They turned to bane and mockery.

They knew no interest but their own,
They shook the State, they shook the Throne.

O years of crime ! The great and true,
The nobly wise—are still the few—
Now bid Truth grow where Falsehood grew,
And plant it for eternity.

The last verse he rendered thus:—

O years of crime ! The great and true,
The nobly wise—now, not the few—
Bid Freedom grow where Corn Laws grew,
And plant it for eternity.

That, as Mr. Chamberlain said, was not a retrospect which would be favourable to any party or any statesman who would have the audacity to propose that we should go back to evil times !

Bills useful to the community were promoted by the Radical President of the Board of Trade. The adoption of electric lighting by municipalities was simplified in 1882 ; and in 1883 he carried through the new Grand Committees a bill to prevent fraudulent liquidations, and a Patents Bill framed in the interests of poor inventors. His Parliamentary reputation was considerably increased by his skill in piloting, especially, the former measure ; he proved himself a tactful manager of his fellow-members. It was the subject of one of the earliest cartoons which Tenniel devoted to him in *Punch*, the artist depicting him spoiling the spoilers. A very acrimonious attack was, however, made upon him in 1884, with reference to the Bankruptcy Act, his political opponents maintaining that posts under it were given as rewards to partisans. Although he assured the House that he did not know the political opinions of the great majority of the officials whom he had appointed, Sir Richard Cross and Sir Hardinge Giffard (the future Lord Chancellor, Halsbury) pressed for inquiry, and Mr. Healy, who was then on friendly terms with Mr. Chamberlain, expressed the opinion that the attack was levelled at him because he was the spokesman of the Radical party.

The most ambitious piece of legislation which he ever undertook was the Merchant Shipping Bill. Early in his official career, influenced by the agitation raised by Mr. Plimsoll, he moved for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the losses of British ships. He investigated the subject for several years, and not only found that there was a terrible loss of life but formed the conviction that much of this was preventable and that the conditions of trade were such as to tend to the loss. Severe criticism was passed on the manner in which he sought a remedy. His own account of it showed that at any rate he was not rash. 'I sought,' he said, 'in the first instance the assistance of the shipowners—and of the best shipowners in the trade—

—in the hope that they would co-operate with me in seeking a reform. I saw scores of them ; I saw the underwriters ; I saw shipmasters ; I saw everybody who was willing and able to give me any information in reference to the matter. But when I asked for public co-operation I am sorry to say I failed in obtaining it.'

Never did he show more earnestness than in his endeavour to pass the Merchant Shipping Bill in 1884. It justified the *Punch* cartoon on 'The Cherub,' and the lines :—

There's a sweet little Chamberlain sits up aloft,
To keep watch over the life of poor Jack.

On the motion for the second reading on May 19, he held the attention of the House for three hours and three quarters. Describing his speech, Mr. Samuel Smith, M.P., in *My Life Work*, says : 'He impressed us with his enormous ability. One thing I noticed : he did not need to take a sip of water during that long delivery—a wonderful sign of physical strength, and also of vocal power.' Although speaking in a studiously subdued tone he did not withdraw the charges he had made against the shipowners, but undertook to substantiate them, and indeed added new counts to the indictment, so that his speech increased the exasperation with which his inquiries had been followed. The basis of his action was the belief that there was unnecessary loss of life in the mercantile marine, and he contended that the main causes were under-manning, overloading and over-insurance. What he objected to, he said, was gambling in human life. 'I proposed to make it impossible for any man to make a profit by the loss of his ship, and of the crew that sailed in her. I proposed to make it impossible for any man to contract himself out of the liability for the negligence of himself or the persons whom he employed. I proposed that the Employers' Liability Act should also be applied to the sea service.'

The bill and the speech were fiercely denounced, and the Minister was accused of wanton interference with trade interests. Mr. David MacIver, a shipowner, who in other circumstances became one of his admirers, scolded Mr. Chamberlain for making personal and libellous attacks on an honourable class, and Mr. Edward Stanhope, a leading Conservative, vehemently accused him of recklessness, while Lord Salisbury denounced him for having brought a horrible and fantastic charge against the shipowners. Even Mr. Samuel Smith, a friendly politician, records that the bill 'excited great repugnance among shipowners generally. Many of them were high-minded men, and resented the implied slight on their honour. They refused to believe in the piratical shipsinkers.' Throughout the country the owners raised a powerful resistance. Mr. Chamberlain fought his case with

boldness and ability, and among large classes excited very deep sympathy. The opposition to the bill, however, proved relentless, and, the Government beset by other difficulties, were unable to proceed with it. Fortunately its author's efforts were not altogether wasted. A Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the whole subject, and several measures which he subsequently inspired or suggested greatly increased the safety of the merchant service.

In consequence of his rebuff in 1884 Mr. Chamberlain contemplated the plan of operation which he adopted about twenty years later in the case of fiscal reform. He expressed his desire to resign office, and fight out the shipping question on the public platform. Mr. Gladstone, however, could not at that period dispense with his services. The franchise agitation had been raised, and in deference to his leader's judgment, he withdrew his resignation so that he might take part in the struggle for reform. Into that struggle he carried the passion which had been baffled in the lesser controversy.

XI

TWO DEMOCRATS

THAT Birmingham demagogue' was the scornful title by which in the early years of his official life Mr. Chamberlain was described by the plain, blunt Tory, Sir Richard Cross. The daring independence with which he started a Radical propaganda caused alarm in the highest quarters, and might have led to a breach in the Government had not he and Mr. Gladstone been at the time necessary to one another. His praise of his chief was occasionally very warm. In a panegyric uttered when Mr. Gladstone was thinking of resigning on account of ill-health, Mr. Chamberlain said on January 16, 1883, that 'his eloquence, his ability, and his experience were part of the national glory, and the vast majority of men would feel that his retirement from the scene upon which he had played so illustrious a part would be an incalculable misfortune for his country,' and he applied to him the words which 'the poet wrote concerning the greatest statesman of the preceding century.'¹

In him, Demosthenes was heard again,
Liberty taught him her Athenian strain;
She clothed him with authority and awe,
Spoke from his lips, and in his looks gave law.

The Prime Minister dealt patiently with Mr. Chamberlain, not only because he himself was magnanimous but also because his colleague had influence over the advanced section of the party and would be more dangerous out of than in the Cabinet. Yet he was sorely tried by the attitude and tone which his subordinate began to assume in the third year of his administration. The 'Birmingham demagogue' then defiantly bounded forward as the exponent of more advanced views than those entertained by the Cabinet, and opened that very bitter personal duel with the Marquis of Salisbury which lasted till the combatants arranged a truce preliminary to an alliance.

One of his most notorious and significant gibes was used as a retort to the Marquis, who, since Lord Beaconsfield's death in 1881, had been the most influential of the Conservative leaders. Lord Salisbury invaded the Midland stronghold on March 28, 1883, and directed a sharp assault on its leader. Two days later Mr. Chamberlain, in a

¹ Cowper on Chatham.

✓ vivacious reply, described him as the spokesman of a class 'who toil not neither do they spin.'¹ Alluding to the warlike policy which his assailant advocated, he quoted the Shakespearian sally: 'See what a desperate homicide this Salisbury is!' and on another theme he attributed to him a 'light and airy arithmetic which is peculiarly his own.' The allusion by a Minister of the Crown to those 'who toil not neither do they spin' has never been forgotten. At the time the gibe was uttered it was received with tremendous delight by the ultra-Radical classes, and by all who expected or desired a social revolution. Here was a levelling leader after their heart! On the other hand, Whigs as well as Conservatives, and the official classes generally, were shocked and offended. They regarded Mr. Chamberlain as a sort of traitor to the cause in which Ministers of the Crown, ex-Ministers and future Ministers were associated. Undaunted by reproof, and unheeding those who tried to pull him back, he attended a celebration in honour of John Bright at Bingley Hall on June 13, and dared to sketch a new programme for the Liberal party, including disestablishment, extension of the suffrage, equal electoral districts, and payment of members. The independence which he thus displayed, rather than the proposals themselves, produced rumbling and grumbling in high places.

The Court was disturbed, Whigs were irritated, and Mr. Gladstone confessed his 'deep regret.' Attention being called in the House of Lords to so unusual a speech, the Government were asked if it represented their policy. Lord Granville, as skilful a fencer as ever stood at the table of the peers, gave a chaffing reply. With acid sarcasm the Marquis of Salisbury affected to find a dual personality in his antagonist. There was the Mr. Chamberlain who represented Birmingham, and there was the Mr. Chamberlain who was a member of the Cabinet. The Marquis compared this dual figure to the Chancellor in *Iolanthe*, who was disposed to commit himself for contempt of court because he allowed himself to make love to a ward in Chancery without obtaining his own consent. In the House of Commons also the Government were challenged with reference to the speech, and Mr. Gladstone drily declared that Mr. Chamberlain had expressed merely his own opinions. These he continued to declare with growing audacity.

Tenniel in a *Punch* cartoon depicted him as a daring duckling. While he swims boldly away on the pond of Radicalism, the 'grand old hen' gazes in wonder and alarm at the duckling she has hatched and the Whig brood watch on the brink with expressions of varied significance. 'Come back! come back!' the old hen clucks.

¹ This gibe was uttered by Mr. Chamberlain on the occasion of an address by Lord Rosebery to the Birmingham Junior Liberal Association.

Oh, where is he going, and what will he do?
 And will he to warning give ear and turn back?
 Or will he prove deaf to the hullabaloo,
 And make his own choice between cackle and quack?
 Cluckitty-cluck
 Audacious young duck!
 Is he off prematurely to try his own luck?

On the very day—the first of July—Mr. Gladstone was writing to a colleague complaining of the license that Mr. Chamberlain took and of his failure to recognize that he was ‘a member of a body,’ gleeful allusions were made to the ‘daring duckling’ at the Cobden Club dinner, at Greenwich, at which the Radical Minister presided. The Free Traders were delighted to learn that his audacity had been unabated by the snubs administered to him on account of his Bingley Hall performance. He was rapturously applauded, and the high-spirited speech which he delivered awoke enthusiasm in a Club by which, twenty years later he was hated beyond any other man, and which he jeered at more bitterly than he ever jeered at the Carlton. His popularity took a marvellous leap. He excited the most dazzling political visions in the minds of Radicals, while he became more than ever the bogey man in the Tory nightmare.

The most vigorous and persistent attacks upon Mr. Chamberlain proceeded from the Fourth Party, which was founded in 1880. It consisted, as a rule, of four exceedingly clever men who sat on the front bench below the Opposition gangway, and played an independent rôle on the Parliamentary stage. Their independence consisted, not in voting now with one side and now with another, but rather seizing opportunities of debate which were neglected by the official leaders of the Opposition, and in pressing home the attack by guerilla methods, from which ex-Ministers naturally shrank. Mr. Balfour, whom Lord Randolph Churchill used to call Postlethwaite, was restrained by his relationship with Lord Salisbury and was the least active and attached member of the party. He sat to ‘Spy’ of *Vanity Fair* for the well-known cartoon of the group, but the tie which bound him to it was comparatively slender. Even in those early days he adopted the habit of sprawling on his back, with his long legs thrust forward, and often he seemed as if lost in contemplation of his handkerchief and gaiters, while Sir Henry Drummond Wolff fidgeted on the edge of the bench, Mr. Gorst plucked his beard and studied the leaders above the gangway with cold, quizzing eyes, and Lord Randolph Churchill stood at the corner with right foot propped forward, badgering the Ministers, or flouting the ‘old gang’ of Conservative statesmen. During a discussion in 1880 when a member remarked that there were two great parties in the State, Mr. Parnell claimed that there were three and Lord Randolph Churchill cried

'Four.' The exclamation provoked jeering laughter, and when a Nationalist nicknamed the noble lord and his friends the Fourth Party, few persons imagined that it would occupy a considerable place in history.

Lord Randolph was the 'Randy' of the early eighties. Newspaper writers described him as 'an aspiring youth,' as 'youthful but impertinent,' as a member possessing 'a puerile love of mischief.' Cartoonists depicted him as Puck, as a clown or a dog, as a midget with Disraeli's curl or Gladstone's collar, as a Lilliputian tying threads round the giant Salisbury, a bumptious boy taking the lead at the hunt on a pony, a rude scholar irritating gentle Dame Northcote and snatching the lesson book out of her hand. He was 'the little child from Woodstock' (the pocket borough which he represented), and the source of parliamentary gaiety was increased when Mr. John Bright's brother, Jacob, alluded to him as 'the member for Woodcock.' Sir William Harcourt was described playing with Lord Randolph as if he were a kitten, and Mr. Gladstone was reproached with paying him too much attention. One can recall him standing at his familiar corner, curling his moustache, or grasping his waist with his hands, and cocking up his patent leather boot on the heel. He was a dandy in those days, with frock-coat, bluish trousers, tie in a large bow and coloured shirt cuffs. Sometimes, in a pause in his vivacious speech, he would glance at the ring on his finger, which passed to his son. Above the gangway sat Sir Stafford Northcote, with his hands timidly hidden in the sleeves of his coat, and on the other side of the table was the impetuous Prime Minister, very impatient under the stings of one whom, in a moment of anger, he likened to an insect.

In spite of snubs from Conservative leaders, and denunciations from Liberal statesmen, Lord Randolph grew in boldness as well as in skill and power, until at last he attracted more attention than any member of Parliament except the Prime Minister himself, and was 'ne'er seen but wondered at.' His heavy moustache, curled up at the ends, became as familiar as Mr. Gladstone's high collars, or Mr. Chamberlain's eye-glass. By dint of much practice he developed into a forcible, though not a finished speaker. He piled up big words into picturesque, extravagant phrases, and was a hard but not a vindictive hitter. His success in the House of Commons was due in large measure to his instinct for tactics, and his great popularity among Conservatives in the country was the result of the courage and vivacity of his attacks on Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain. A sort of fellow-feeling with the independent Tory enabled the Radical Minister to set a true estimate on his character. 'I believe,' he remarked, 'the noble lord always says what he means and means what

he says: and I find that what he says to-day his leaders say to-morrow.' They met in friendly manner at private houses. Like Sir William Harcourt and Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Chamberlain was often at Lord Randolph Churchill's, and he had the honour to dine with the Fourth Party,—an event which greatly shocked the Duke of Marlborough, 'who did not understand how his son could cultivate social relations with a person of such pernicious opinions.' This friendship, however, did not interfere with political warfare.

Personal abuse of Mr. Chamberlain was plentiful in the years when he was the hope of the Radicals. His gibe at those 'who toil not neither do they spin' provoked many retorts of a quality which was at any rate not better than that of his own taunt. Lord Randolph Churchill, for instance, sneered at the critic of peers for basking in the smiles of the Earl of Durham at Newcastle, and mockingly described him as 'this stern patriot; this rigid moralist; this unbending censor—the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain.' 'Humbug of humbugs,' cried the Tory democrat, 'all is humbug!'

Recrimination of a virulent sort was indulged in very freely in a pamphlet by Mr. W. T. Marriott, Q.C., a member of Parliament who left the Liberal party long before Mr. Chamberlain and who had attacked his conduct as a manufacturer. 'Were Mr. Chamberlain himself an anchorite,' wrote Mr. Marriott, 'or a monk living on plain fare, and wearing mean apparel, and distributing his goods to the poor, nobody would condemn the jeremiads he preaches against wealth and the wealthy, however useless they might consider them. But for one who is clothed in purple and fine linen, and who fares sumptuously every day, to denounce purple, fine linen and sumptuous fare strikes people as somewhat incongruous.' The polite pamphleteer, who was honoured by the Tories when they obtained office, referred in the same tone to Mr. Chamberlain's princely income, his stately luxurious mansion, and the flower to the cultivation of which he devoted annually sums of money sufficient to clothe, house and feed comfortably a score of his poorer neighbours!

An extravaganza entitled 'Mr. Daniel Creedy, M.P.,' published in 1884, was intended as a skit on Mr. Chamberlain. Creedy is a screw manufacturer, and the writer, describing how he lost his nose, declares that although a Radical gentleman he was not radically a gentleman. He was 'conscious that he carried about with him and betrayed in the presence of his social betters a soupçon of the Great Unwashed, whence he had issued more or less remotely, which no amount of gilding would cover. As he sat in his chair by himself, as he walked in the lobby of the House of Commons, as he conversed with a lady at a dinner, it was there—haunting but never humbling him.' Abuse of this sort was applauded by the Conservatives who in a few years hailed the member for Birmingham as a saviour of the country.

XII

LORDS AND RIOTS

Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in
Bear't that the opposer may beware of thee.

ALTHOUGH this was the spirit in which Mr. Gladstone approached the House of Lords with the measure for the extension of household suffrage to the counties, it did not represent Mr. Chamberlain's temper. The Radical leader eagerly and hastily adopted a threatening tone. As early as December 4, 1883, alluding to the expectation that the peers would try to force a dissolution on the Franchise Bill, which was to be the main legislative business of the following year, he challenged them with taunts. 'I am inclined,' he said, 'to hope, in the words of the beautiful Church Litany, which is read every Sunday, that the nobility may be endued with grace, wisdom and understanding. I trust that the House of Lords will have the wisdom and the understanding to appreciate the justice of the claim which will be preferred to them, and I hope that Lord Salisbury will have the grace to yield without provoking a conflict in which he cannot possibly be victorious.' A fortnight later he was still more stinging. 'As to the House of Lords,' he remarked, 'if that august assembly is afraid of the Radical flood there is one very simple plan by which it may save itself from all possible injury. Let it clear out of the way, then the popular movement will do it no harm at all.' This language, although applauded by Radicals throughout the country, was not calculated to smooth the passage of reform.

A crisis occurred in the Cabinet at the end of 1883, when procedure was considered, Lord Hartington taking the line which was afterwards followed by the Conservatives, and desiring that the extension of the suffrage should be accompanied by a redistribution of seats. Eventually it was decided as the Government policy that redistribution should follow as rapidly as possible, but friction was for a time increased by Mr. Chamberlain's too great frankness. 'I have intimated to Hartington'—Lord Granville wrote Mr. Gladstone—'my regret at individual members of the Cabinet publicly announcing their opinions on matters which are to be discussed there.'¹

¹ *Life of Lord Grenville.*

In the House of Commons, Mr. Chamberlain seemed more anxious to heat the furnace of feeling than to show consideration for timid and halting folk. The action of the Opposition, in meeting the Franchise Bill with an amendment declining to proceed with it until there was also submitted a scheme of redistribution, gave him an opportunity for the sort of speech in which he excelled. He twitted the Conservatives on being 'willing to wound and yet afraid to strike,' and he excited emotion by his references to those from whom the vote was being withheld. One stirring passage caused a special commotion. 'What,' said the orator, 'has happened in consequence of the agricultural labourers not having a voice in this House? They have been robbed of their land.' (Protests, and cries of 'Withdraw.') 'I repeat that they have been robbed of their land. They have been robbed of their rights in the commons. They have been robbed of their open spaces. . . . It may be said that those proceedings which I have characterized in language not a whit too strong have now come to an end. Not a bit of it; they are going on still.' 'The agricultural labourers,' he added vehemently, 'are still being robbed.'

This heightening of the controversy again embarrassed Mr. Gladstone, who was chiefly concerned to secure the passing of his bill, and it caused annoyance to Lord Hartington and the other moderate Liberals. Lord George Hamilton expressed a feeling which was not confined to Conservatives, when he said he had never listened to 'a more ill-conditioned speech,' and Sir Robert Peel described it as 'most mischievous and most inflammatory,' and as a direct appeal to mob violence. According to another critic Mr. Chamberlain posed as the Admirable Crichton of all the revolutionary classes.

The controversy became still more animated when the Franchise Bill was sent in the summer of 1884 to the Upper House. It had been for four months before the Commons, but the Lords lost no time in dealing with it, and they rejected it for a session by passing an amendment such as had been moved by the Conservatives in the representative Chamber.

In the campaign which followed the obstructive action of the peers, Mr. Chamberlain was the most forward, aggressive leader. He spoke with impatience of the counsels of calmness which came from the Whigs. Conspicuous among these was Mr. Goschen, whose opposition to the extension of the county franchise had kept him out of the Government, who had declined the Viceroyalty of India, the embassy at Constantinople, the War Secretaryship and the Speakership, but who in a special mission to Turkey had done great service for the State, and whose authority in the Liberal party had been increased by his conduct at a Parliamentary crisis produced by the Soudanese imbroglio. Although sympathizing with much of the Conservative criticism he had

refused to give Lord Salisbury 'a blank cheque,' and thus he assisted to prolong the life of the Government. Now he was listened to by a large section of the country with respect when he preached moderation. Mr. Chamberlain, however, sneered at his counsel. 'It reminds me,' he said, 'of the recommendations which were published some time ago in the *Philadelphia Ledger* addressed to those whose garments might unfortunately catch fire, one of which wound up with the earnest injunction to any lady who should find herself involved in flames to keep herself as cool as possible.'

Most lively encounters took place between Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain. The antagonists were well-matched in caustic and incisive speech. Neither was afraid of words and neither was afraid of the other. A monster demonstration held in London on a summer day in favour of the Franchise Bill provoked the injudicious jeers of the Tory leader. He remarked that the Government instead of going to the polls took the public opinion of the streets; they called for processions; they attempted legislation by picnic. The voice thus heard was 'a counterfeit voice manufactured by the Caucus.' This was quite in the Salisbury vein, and the master of the Caucus was equally characteristic in his prompt reply at the Devonshire Club. To 'legislation by picnic' he retorted with a gibe at 'obstruction by privilege,' and he imputed to Lord Salisbury 'an air of patrician arrogance.' Behind his 'flimsy and disingenuous pretexts' Mr. Chamberlain detected hate of the franchise, and he declared that the marquis was in this respect 'only the true representative of the inveterate prejudices of his party.'

The language of the chief controversialists was still angrier in the autumn, and included rather unseemly allusions to broken heads. Lord Salisbury imagined Mr. Chamberlain leading a procession from Birmingham, and wished him a broken head for his pains. The Radical replied that he was not afraid of 'my Lord Salisbury nor of his retainers,' and offered to lead a procession on the condition that his adversary should conduct the opposing column. 'In that case,' he added, 'if my head is broken it will be broken in very good company.' This was a rather unusual style of controversy to be carried on by statesmen, but probably when the combatants united in a common cause they laughed at the old feud.

Deep emotions were stirred by the attacks on the House of Lords delivered during this crisis by the member for Birmingham, and fears were felt for the permanence of an institution which he subsequently called to his assistance. He spoke exultantly of the issue, which, as he represented, had been raised by Lord Salisbury: 'the issue between the peers and the people; between the privileges of the few and the rights of the many,' and he declared that the Upper House had always

been the ready tool of the party of obstruction and of prejudice. 'During the last hundred years it has never,' he said, 'contributed one iota to public liberty or public freedom, or done anything to advance the common weal, and during that time it has protected every abuse and sheltered every privilege. It has denied justice and delayed reform. It is irresponsible without independence, obstinate without courage, arbitrary without judgment, and arrogant without knowledge.'¹ In a merry mood he added, in words which the Birmingham Tory paper had sarcastically applied to the Commons on his own election to Parliament :—

Alas, unconscious of their doom
The little victims play ;
No thought have they of ills to come
No care beyond to-day.

Alas, it was Mr. Chamberlain who was unconscious of his doom ! Blind to the future—on which no living man can look—he spent the autumn of 1884 exposing the peers to the wrath of the people, and heaping denunciation on their Conservative leader. He seemed not only ready but anxious for a conflict between the two Houses. His language was conspicuously different in tone from Lord Hartington's. As Lord Salisbury sneeringly remarked, Lord Hartington had 'a natural but temporary disinclination to abolish his own father.'

'Compromise,' a word which even Mr. Gladstone at the moment did not like, was breathed by the leader of the Whig section of his Cabinet, but at Hanley in a very vehement speech on October 7, Mr. Chamberlain flouted Lord Salisbury's 'arrogant proposals' for the simultaneous passing of franchise and redistribution, and refused to have any transactions with 'a statesman whose attitude was so overbearing.' Next day his chief wrote to him a kindly and conciliatory letter counselling 'reserve.' Lord Salisbury declared that his language was 'as discreditable to the Minister who uttered it as to the Ministers who remained his colleagues' ; Lord Randolph Churchill sneered at him as a pinchbeck Robespierre, and Mr. Balfour was severe in condemnation of his strictures upon members of the House of Lords, saying that 'they consisted in about equal measure of bad history, bad logic and bad taste,' and maintaining that the riots which occurred at Aston Park 'naturally resulted' from his speech at Hanley.

These strictures on the peers culminated in a famous deliverance at Denbigh on October 20. It seemed at the time as if this deliverance definitely committed Mr. Chamberlain to a movement for the

¹ Attention was called to this attack by Viscount Newport in the House of Commons, but each point in the quoted passage was cheered by the Radicals, and the Prime Minister refused to be brought to account for every word spoken by a colleague.

abolition of the hereditary principle in the Legislature, and Radicals have looked back upon it with admiration as one of the ablest and most finely-phrased indictments of the Upper House. On many an occasion, either in sympathy or in sarcasm, they have quoted the statement of the lost leader that 'the chronicles of the House of Lords are one long record of concessions delayed until they have lost their grace, of rights denied until extorted from their fears.' And Non-conformists, with feelings of sadness and anger, have recalled how they cheered and honoured—aye! and loved the man who said that as a Dissenter he had an account to settle with the House of Lords, and would not forget the reckoning. 'The cup is nearly full,' he exclaimed, 'the career of high-handed wrong is coming to an end!'

The cup of wrath was not filled. Moderate counsels prevailed in the Conservative party. Negotiations between leaders on the two sides were promoted by the Queen, with of course the approval of the Prime Minister, and after much diplomacy they arrived at an arrangement. The scheme of redistribution was settled in a friendly manner between representatives of the Government and of the Opposition, and the Franchise Bill, reintroduced in an autumn session, was passed by the peers and became law in December. If the Lords had proved obdurate Parliamentary history would have followed a different course from that which it took during the next twenty years. Instead of the Liberal party being rent in twain by Home Rule it might have united under Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain in an attack on the Upper House, and the flood-gates would have been opened to a rush of Radicalism.

Reference has been made to the Aston Park riots. These were memorable not only for the encounter by which they were followed in the House of Commons, but also for their own ferocity. They have been described by a prominent Midland politician as 'the last appeals of the bludgeon as a political factor in England.'¹ A demonstration in support of the peers was arranged to be held at Aston Park, Birmingham, on October 13, and speeches were to be delivered by Sir Stafford Northcote and Lord Randolph Churchill. Local Radicals objected to a meeting, to which Tories from the surrounding districts were to be conveyed by special trains, being represented as an expression of Birmingham opinion; tickets of admission were forged, thousands of persons assembled for a counter-demonstration, scaled the wall and forced their way into the grounds; the meeting place was stormed, the platform was captured and the intending speakers were exposed to rough treatment and forced to withdraw. Although Sir Stafford Northcote expressed the good-natured opinion that the proceeding was mainly horse-play, some of his friends were afraid at the time that he

¹ *Reminiscences of a Country Politician*, by John A. Bridges.

might be injured. Mr. Chamberlain was held responsible by opponents for the disgraceful outbreak. It was contended not only that his speeches incited the Radicals to make the counter demonstration, but that it was organized by his satellites and that he knew of its object beforehand and might have prevented it by the exercise of his influence. General sympathy with Sir Stafford Northcote was expressed, and Lady Randolph Churchill in her *Reminiscences* testifies to her husband's 'righteous indignation at such treatment, particularly from a friend, even though a political opponent.'

The Parliamentary duel on the subject between the President of the Board of Trade and Lord Randolph was anticipated with immense interest. There was some manœuvring as to the order of combat. On October 23 Sir Henry Drummond Wolff approached the subject and accused Mr. Chamberlain of complicity with the outrages. Lord Randolph waited in vain for the adversary's defence. Next day he demanded an answer, but the Birmingham fighter still reserved his speech, remarking that Sir Henry Drummond Wolff appeared to be acting as jackal to the leader of the Fourth Party. Although a hubbub was caused by the use of the term 'jackal,' Mr. Chamberlain did not relinquish any advantage in position. He waited for the charge of his chief assailant.

At last Lord Randolph, who boasted that he would draw the badger, submitted on the 30th a motion practically accusing the Radical leader of having incited to riot and disorder. He asserted that tickets had been forged by Liberals, that ladders had been provided and gangs of roughs organized by the Caucus. His indictment appeared to be very damaging. The member for Birmingham, however, was in his element. He replied in one of the most adroit and spirited speeches which he had ever delivered. For his defence he read a number of affidavits by roughs who were said to have been engaged by a Conservative official to turn out Liberals from the meeting, and he insisted that it was their violence which provoked the outbreak. Mr. Churchill in the biography of his father mentions that as Mr. Chamberlain's speech was drawing to a close Lord Randolph leaned across the gangway and asked Sir Michael Hicks-Beach if he would reply, but Sir Michael, much impressed by the Radical Minister's arguments, declined. The spirits of the Conservatives, however, were revived by personal attacks upon him and by the arguments of Sir Hardinge Giffard, who threw doubt upon the authenticity of the quoted documents in which there was 'suspicious identity of language.'

Dislike of Mr. Chamberlain was expressed with special bitterness in a strange maiden speech by Mr. P. A. Muntz (afterwards Sir Philip) who had been a Liberal but had gone over to the Conservatives and

was elected for a constituency within the Birmingham sphere of influence. Not foreseeing that they would again be on the same side Mr. Muntz commented on the audacity of the Radical leader and charged him with irregular practices. The conduct of the mob was, he said, the result of a council of war held by Mr. Chamberlain and the Caucus, 'which dared not lift a finger without his knowledge.' He taunted him as a declared Republican with having accepted office under the Crown and as a servant of the Constitution with making attacks on it, 'on every occasion and in every conceivable way.' Mr. Chaplin, in a prophecy at which the Radicals laughed derisively, predicted that the day would come when Mr. Chamberlain would regret that he had spoken with such violence of the House of Lords. His speeches, according to this grieved censor, had been animated by the desire to inflict irreparable injury on a great institution. Mr. Arthur Balfour, in turn, remarked that certain constituencies were 'not too fastidious,' and that if the speech which he had made at Hanley were delivered in Ireland he would have had to sleep on a plank bed and live on prison cocoa.

No gibes or personal censures, however, undid the effect of his brilliant defence. Mr. Gladstone cheered and enjoyed 'an extremely powerful' speech, and the whole Liberal party were delighted with its skill and success. Lord Randolph could not be congratulated upon his badger-drawing. An eminent naturalist, as a proud Radical reminded the House, had said that the badger was an inoffensive animal provided by nature for its own defence with very powerful claws. Such claws were effectively used on this occasion. The case of the riots was carried into the courts and a man whose affidavit had been quoted was charged with criminal libel and sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment, the judge moralizing on the result of political rancour, and counsel for the prosecution describing the offender as a poor, ignorant fellow who had been made a tool. So far, however, as Parliament was concerned Mr. Chamberlain's victory was complete, and the fear of Birmingham and its fighting member was increased. To draw that fighter became for twenty years the most hazardous sport at St. Stephen's. He was, as Mr. Morley said, 'the wariest, toughest, and most powerful badger ever known.'

As we learn from the biography of Lord Randolph, a total breach in his strange friendship with the Radical minister was caused by the quarrel over the riots. Radical democrat and Tory democrat no longer saluted one another, and such correspondence as was necessary was conducted with frigid formality. Mr. Churchill gives in his brilliant book a letter, dated October 28, 1884, in which 'Mr. Chamberlain presents his compliments to Lord R. Churchill.' When, however, the President of the Board of Trade heard a month later that Lord

Randolph was about to start for a holiday in India on account of his health, he wrote to 'My dear Churchill,' expressing very kindly wishes and describing himself *sans rancune*. To this generous letter his old friend replied in the most hearty terms. 'I had always hoped,' wrote Lord Randolph, 'that the friendship which existed between us and which for my part I most highly valued, might at all times be altogether unaffected by any parliamentary conflicts, however brisk and even sharp the latter might be.'¹

The Fourth Party, which in its later career lost the assistance of Mr. Balfour, was dissolved in the confusion of the Franchise Bill controversy, when its leader came to an understanding with the Marquis of Salisbury and dined at the Cecil mansion in Arlington Street. 'The two men,' says Mr. Churchill, 'met as chiefs on almost equal terms.' In a *Punch* cartoon Mr. Linley Sambourne treated the event as a *mariage de convenance*, after Orchardson's famous picture, Lord Randolph sitting gloomily at one end of the table and Butler Northcote pouring wine into Lord Salisbury's glass at the other end.

¹ *Lord Randolph Churchill*, by Winston S. Churchill.

XIII

UNAUTHORIZED PROGRAMME

'The poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as much as the greatest he.'—A Roundhead of 1647.

THE year 1885 marked the flood tide of Mr. Chamberlain's popularity in the Liberal party and among the reformers of the country. While he submitted and with great earnestness advocated the proposals which Mr. Goschen truly described as the unauthorized programme, the eyes of Radicals and of all who desired to see vast changes turned to him with hope and confidence. By the working classes in the towns, and by labourers in the rural districts, he was hailed as a political prophet, as a social saviour, who could and would introduce a new era of equality and comfort. Nothing but an old man's life stood between him and the headship of the Liberals. He was already regarded by a section as the real leader of the party; and the champions of privilege and vested rights dreaded him as their most dangerous enemy.

Many of those who cheered Mr. Chamberlain in 1885, and from whom he parted in 1886, charged him with desiring to supplant Mr. Gladstone. As he was ambitious, and went faster than his chief, it was suspected that he wished to take the chief's place before the veteran was ready to retire. But although he advocated his own views with unusual independence and endeavoured by means of public opinion to secure their adoption in the Cabinet he resorted to no act of rebellion. On the contrary, almost since he entered Parliament he had abstained from the admonitions to the leader in which he indulged in previous years, and during his tenure of office he pronounced on Mr. Gladstone some glowing panegyrics. In December, 1882, he described him as 'the noblest figure in English political history'; and in the following month, as already noted, he said Mr. Gladstone's retirement would be 'an incalculable misfortune.' In January, 1885, he boasted of a leader 'whose unsurpassed ability and long-trying devotion to the people's service had earned for him their undying regard and esteem'; and in June he delivered a splendid eulogy of which he was often reminded, declaring that great men are like great mountains,¹ and that we do not appreciate their magnitude while we are still close

¹ He had previously used this simile with reference to Cobden.

to them. Extolling 'the greatest statesman of our time' he protested against the vulgar affronts and the lying accusations of which Mr. Gladstone had nightly been made the subject in the House of Commons, and said it 'behoved those whom he had served so long to remember these things, to resent them, and to punish them.'

It was against the moderate Liberals, rather than against their common chief, that he openly directed his ambitious designs. He admitted that he found it difficult to reconcile his loyalty to colleagues in the Cabinet with the Radical principles which he represented; and while frankly reserving the immediate application of his opinions, he strove to ensure their success in the future. Probably in those days he shared the general belief encouraged by Mr. Gladstone himself that the famous chief would soon put off his armour, and no doubt he was determined that in that event his own views, and not the more moderate doctrines of Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen, should prevail. The struggle of 1885 was a struggle between these statesmen and himself.

His speeches in expounding the unauthorized Radical programme were the most eloquent of his life. They were inspired by a vivid consciousness of the needs of his poor fellow-countrymen, and by a burning conviction as to the necessary remedies. Out of the heart the orator spoke. His utterances were those of deep sincerity. A tone of passion vibrated in his voice, and thrilled his audiences. He tried in later years to repeat that thrill, but the fire seldom flashed into the old flame. After 1886 Mr. Chamberlain's career—to use another metaphor—was diverted from its original tendency and course, and while swollen into a great stream it lost some of its natural impetuosity and force.

Although his independent campaign opened with a sensational declaration on ransom at Birmingham in January, 1885, it had been prepared a considerable time beforehand. There had been a growing divergence between Mr. Chamberlain's aims and aspirations and those of the Whig section of his Cabinet colleagues. Even in 1883 that keen and incisive critic, Lord Salisbury, expressed surprise that so Radical a politician should be a member of the same Government as Lord Granville and Lord Hartington. 'We have,' he said, 'a Cabinet which, as a Cabinet, looks upon manhood suffrage as dangerous, and utterly resists the disestablishment of the English Church. We have a minister in that Cabinet, wielding the authority of the Cabinet, and standing in his position by virtue of the countenance they give him. We have him declaring that any other solution than that of manhood suffrage will be depriving millions of their right, and that the property of the Church of England belongs to every section of the nation.' In the same year this independent Cabinet minister gave

the following sketch of the questions upon which he believed the great majority of the people were agreed, but whose solution was delayed till all were taken into counsel : ' The complete establishment of religious equality, the freedom of education in our national schools, the improvement of the dwellings of the poor, the improvement of the condition of the agricultural labourers, the popular control of the liquor traffic, and such a readjustment of taxation as would proportion its burdens to the means and ability of the taxpayer.' Then came the battle of the franchise with Mr. Chamberlain's eager desire to fight the House of Lords, in order that—as he said—its career of highhanded wrong might be brought to an end. At the close of that controversy he began his own new campaign with full energy and vigour.

' How to promote the greater happiness of the masses of the people, how to increase their enjoyment of life : ' that, he declared in his celebrated speech at Birmingham, on January 5, 1885, was the problem of the future. The centre of power, as he argued, had been shifted, and the old order was giving place to the new. Tracing this new order he made the allusion to ransom which was so often quoted during the remainder of his life. ' I ask,' he said, ' what ransom will properly pay for the security which it enjoys ? What substitute will it find for the natural rights which have ceased to be recognized ? Society is banded together in order to protect itself against the instincts of men who would make very short work of private ownership if they were left alone. That is all very well, but I maintain that society owes to these men something more than mere toleration in return for the restrictions which it places upon their liberty of action.'

On several occasions Mr. Chamberlain had caused a shudder to run through the contented classes, but his new offence was regarded as the worst. He was reprimanded and reproached for making a direct attack upon the rights of property, and for inciting the poor to confiscation. ' *The Times* newspaper,' as he said, ' did me the honour to misrepresent me ; Lord Salisbury denounced me ; Mr. Goschen lectured me ; the Duke of Argyll scolded me ; and the *Spectator* newspaper preached to me.' In a note in his journal on the ' ransom ' speech Mr. Goschen wrote : ' Quite detestable. . . . Setting class against class ; all against property, which he implies but does not actually say is landed property.'¹ Mr. Chamberlain was undismayed by a storm of protests. He continued to warn friends and foes that the political world was about to be changed by the great increase of the power of the large towns, secured through the redistribution of seats, and by the appearance at the poll of the agricultural labourer. The old shibboleths would be found insufficient for the altered circumstances of the case, and it would be no good to rattle the dry bones

¹ *Life of Lord Goschen*, by the Hon. Arthur D. Elliot.

of past political controversies. With feelings of gratitude and hope such warm words as the following were heard in the humble cottages of the land: 'The agricultural labourer is the most pathetic figure in our whole social system. He is condemned by apparently inexorable conditions to a life of unremitting and hopeless toil, with the prospect of the poorhouse as its only or probable termination. For generations he has been oppressed, ignored, defrauded, and now he will have to be reckoned with.'

'The right to live,' 'natural rights,' 'a right to a part of the land of his birth,' 'the duty of society as a whole to secure the comfort and welfare of all its individual members'—these were phrases with which Mr. Chamberlain caused a greater fright even than his actual proposals. When such have been used in a later day by Socialist members of the House of Commons they have been severely reprobated, and in 1885 they were regarded as the phrases of a leveller and an anarchist. Their author was denounced by the landed aristocracy as a man who, for his own political purposes, was prepared to turn society upside down. Taunts often heard in private were publicly repeated at a Conservative Club by Mr. Marriott who sneered at Mr. Chamberlain posing as a plebeian and added:—'If to have an income of £15,000 or £20,000 a year, if to live in a palatial residence, and to have the best food, and the choicest wines and cigars, and to entertain the rich and noble, was being a plebeian, why! every man would like to be a plebeian. Mr. Chamberlain was ready to be all things to all men. No doubt he had made sacrifices. For a member of a Republican Club to take the oath of allegiance was a sacrifice; for the man who before 1873 desired to abolish the Royal family it must have been a sacrifice to go to Windsor and dine with Her Majesty.'

Meanwhile the new programme continued to be unfolded by its inventor. At Ipswich, on January 14, he advocated free education; the extension of local government to the counties; the provision of healthy, decent dwellings in large towns and in the country; facilities for the labourer to obtain a small plot of land; the taxation of ground rents; graduated income-tax; land reform; the restitution of common land and of charitable endowments diverted from the poor. 'If the rights of property are sacred,' he argued, 'surely the rights of the poor are entitled to an especial reverence. Naboth's vineyard deserves protection quite as much as Ahab's palace.' Torrents of abuse and whirlwinds of invective enveloped him, as he informed his constituents on January 29, but he ridiculed the clamour about confiscation and blackmail and plunder. It was, he declared, 'so much dust raised by men who were interested in maintaining the present system, and who are either too prejudiced to read my proposals or to stupid to understand them.' Among these proposals he included

labour representation, payment of members, one man one vote, and in spite of the anger and derision of the landed class, he repeated that he was anxious to call in the local authorities in every district and give them power to take land at its fair value and incur expenditure in the provision of small holdings. He had a warning for the landlords who were rebuking him. 'If they are unable to develop their property to the best advantage, if they cannot perform the obligations which attach to it, then I say they must be taught that their ownership is a trust which is limited by the supreme necessities of the nation, and they must give place to others who will do full justice to the capabilities of the land.'

— By declarations which not only were made without the approval of the Cabinet but were obviously intended to bring popular pressure to bear on the Whig section, Mr. Chamberlain again added to the embarrassments of the much-vexed Prime Minister. Earl Granville's letters show that the most tolerant of colleagues resented his conduct. It was complained that he had used a great meeting at Birmingham to overcome the opinions of those who disagreed with him in the Government. 'I intended,' wrote Lord Granville to Mr. Gladstone on February 1, 'raising the question of his home utterances if he had been present at the Cabinet, not as a complaint of his holding opinions from which I might partially or wholly differ, but of his action as a member of the Cabinet.'¹ Lord Hartington was uncomfortable and unsettled, and there was imminent danger of a rupture in the Government, which was threatened at many points. News of the fall of Khartoum arrived on February 5; in April the decision was taken to retire from the Soudan; then arose the risk of a war with Russia in consequence of the Penjdeh incident on the frontier of Afghanistan; and Ireland was as usual a cause of contention and keen anxiety. Nevertheless, as Mr. Morley recalls, Mr. Gladstone 'imputed no low motives to a colleague because the colleague gave him trouble.'

Criticism of the new doctrines of Socialism at the early stage of their advocacy proceeded chiefly from Lord Salisbury and Mr. Goschen; and to these critics Mr. Chamberlain replied with light heart and undaunted mind. Dealing with the Conservative leader at an Eighty Club function he complained of characteristic invective and characteristic inaccuracy, and described the gist of Lord Salisbury's recent speeches as the promise of a vigorous foreign policy, and a feeble imitation of Protection in the guise of what was called Fair Trade. This seemed to the Radical reformer to be 'rather a small programme for a great party.' At Mr. Goschen he sneered in an elaborate passage of sarcasm, as 'the candid friend.' To hear some

¹ *Life of Lord Granville*, by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice.

people talk one would suppose that the only thing for a Liberal to do was to cultivate his own garden for himself. Mr. Chamberlain, however, did not think that the circumstances justified the optimism of Candide. Describing the poverty which 'goes on in sight of the mansions of the rich,' and calling for something more than barren and fruitless criticism, he boldly asserted 'the duty of society as a whole to secure the comfort and welfare of all its individual members.'

Dissension in the Cabinet extending over a variety of subjects came to a point in the case of Ireland. The question of renewing the Crimes Act clamoured for decision, and agreement was difficult. Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke pressed for local government and no coercion. At most they would consent only to the renewal of the Crimes Act for one year, and the *Birmingham Post* announced, on May 22, that if the Government did not take this course these Radical statesmen would resign their places. Subsequently they agreed to the milder provisions of the Act being continued for two years, if accompanied by satisfactory measures of local government. The Ministers were still deliberating on the portions of the statute to be renewed when they were defeated on the Budget by a combination of the Nationalists with the Conservatives.¹ Passionate enthusiasm was displayed by the victors. Stirring scenes of triumph have been witnessed since then, but on no occasion was passion fiercer than in June, 1885. Nationalists exulted over the defeat of a Government which had mixed very stiff coercion with generous remedies, and Conservatives were excited to ecstasy by the overthrow of those whom they held responsible for the death of General Gordon. The Ministers themselves were not sorry to escape from office, and it was asserted that the chief Whip took less than the usual measures to secure a majority.

Although the achievements of Mr. Gladstone's second Government fell short of expectation they formed the subject of complacent retrospect by one of its members. Mr. Chamberlain gave a record of great accomplishments: 'We have abolished flogging in the army; we have suspended the operation of the odious Acts called the Contagious Diseases Acts; we have amended the game laws; we have reformed the burial laws; we have introduced and carried an Employers' Liability Bill; we have had a Bankruptcy Act, a Patents Act and a host of secondary measures, which together would have formed the stock-in-trade of a Tory Government for twenty years at least. And these are the fringe only, the outside of the more important

¹ An understanding had been arrived at between the allies that a Conservative Government would not renew the Crimes Act, would grant an inquiry into the case of certain convictions known as the Maamtrasna case and would appoint a Viceroy sympathetic to Irish aspirations.

legislation of our time, the chief elements in which have been the Irish Land Bill and the Reform Bill.' It was, however—then and always—rather with the future than with the past that the Radical leader was concerned. He wound up a review of two Parliaments by saying : ' I believe that the reduction of the franchise will bring into prominence social questions which have been too long neglected, that it may force upon the consideration of thinking men of all parties the condition of our poor—aye, and the contrast which unfortunately exists between the great luxury and wealth which some enjoy, and the misery and destitution which prevail amongst large portions of the population. I do not believe that the Liberal policy, mine or any other, will ever take away the security which property rightly enjoys—that it will ever destroy the certainty that industry and thrift will meet with their due reward ; but I do think that something may be done to enlarge the obligation and responsibility of the whole community towards its poorer and less fortunate members.'

XIV

THE LIBERAL LEADERSHIP

RELIEF from office was welcomed by no Minister more than by Mr. Chamberlain. The defeat of the Government in June, 1885, gave him a freer opportunity to advocate his own programme. A turning point had been reached in the Liberal march, and the question arose—Who was to lead the party henceforward? Was the old chief to remain at the head of the forces, or was he to give place to another? And if he was to retire to his tent was he to be succeeded by a Moderate or by a Radical?

All the qualities of a leader were displayed by Mr. Chamberlain. He was prompt and brisk in attack on the opposing party and bold in the promotion of a policy for his followers. At a Cobden club dinner and at a Holloway meeting a few days after the Liberal defeat, while prescribing his own remedies, including the satisfaction of Irish patriotic feeling, he poured unmeasured contempt on the Administration which had been formed by Lord Salisbury. He ridiculed the 'stop-gap Government' and the 'caretakers on the premises,' and pictured the Conservative party 'with indecent expedition hastening to divest itself of a whole wardrobe of pledges and professions which it had accumulated during the past few years, stripping off every rag of consistency, and standing up naked and not ashamed in order that it might squeeze itself into office.' He complained of a want of fair play on the part of the Conservatives when they were in opposition, alleging that they had ignored the decencies of debate, and lowered the dignity of the House of Commons, in order to embarrass 'a statesman who with a load of years upon his head, and with the almost intolerable burdens of the Empire upon his shoulders, had been called upon again and again to bear the brunt of personal malignity and of studied disrespect.'

With equal vehemence at Hackney, on July 24, Mr. Chamberlain denounced them for making a compact with the Parnellite party, and in language such as is seldom applied by one in his position to Ministers of the Crown, he remarked that the consistency of our public life, the honour of political controversy, the patriotism of statesmen had been profaned and trampled in the mire by a crowd of hungry office-seekers who were now doing Radical work in the Tory uniform. Lord

Salisbury and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach were, he said, dragged at the tail of Lord Randolph Churchill (who had been appointed Secretary of State for India), but he added, for the consolation of his friends, that 'a democratic revolution was not to be accomplished by aristocratic pervers.' His own programme, as he now unfolded it, included local government, the reform of the land laws, revision of taxation, control of the liquor traffic, the question of the State Church, free schools, the abolition of the game laws, and the greater security of life at sea. 'We cannot,' he said, 'trust the solution of these questions to the forced consent of the Tory party, to be refused as long as possible, to be conceded with reluctance, to be granted only when further resistance has become dangerous and impossible.'

On the evening that he was at Hackney, nearly 300 Liberal peers and members of the House of Commons attended a banquet to Lord Spencer, in honour of his Irish vice-royalty. Lord Hartington presided, and Mr. John Bright joined in the demonstration. The absence of the two most prominent Radicals was noted with displeasure. 'Amongst those who were present,' writes Mr. Goschen's biographer, 'a strong feeling undoubtedly prevailed that Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke were shirking their responsibility for the unpopular acts of the late Cabinet.'¹ There was, indeed, little room in their hearts for sympathy with a colleague who had administered coercion.

The publication in July of *The Radical Programme*, comprising a series of articles which had appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, and bearing on its red cover the attractive advertisement 'with a preface by the Rt. Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P.,' was an important factor in the political controversy. 'Radicalism which has been the creed of the most numerous section of the Liberal party outside the House of Commons will henceforth,' said the writer of the preface, 'be a powerful factor inside the walls of the popular Chamber. The stage of agitation has passed and the time for action has come. . . . New conceptions of public duty, new developments of social enterprise, new estimates of the natural obligations of the members of the community to one another have come into view and demand consideration.' He did not pledge himself to all the proposals contained in the book, but the belief was that it had been written under his inspiration, and it gave increased impetus to the Radical movement. Among the projects which it set forth were 'manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, payment of members, disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England, creation of national councils for Scotland, Ireland and Wales, progressive taxation of incomes and of realized property, reform of land tenure, and free education.' Nearly the whole of this programme was advocated also on the platform by Mr. Chamberlain.

¹ *Life of Lord Goschen*, by the Hon. Arthur D. Elliot.

Radicals who attended his meetings went home to read the volume; others bought the printed word who could not hear the voice. The book had a large circulation throughout the country and was read with eagerness and fascination as the gospel of a social millennium.

A doubly terrific aspect was given in the minds of Whigs and Conservatives to the new proposals, on account of the Socialistic sentiments with which their author surrounded them. He spoke of 'the excessive aggregation of wealth in a few hands,' and in recommending land reforms he remarked that 'the sanctity of private property is no doubt an important principle, but the public good is a greater and higher object than any private interest, and the comfort and happiness of the people and the prosperity of the country must never be sacrificed to the exaggerated claims of a privileged class who are now the exclusive possessors of the great gift of the Almighty to the human race.' Again: 'Our object is the elevation of the poor, of the masses of the people—a levelling up of them, by which we shall do something to remove the excessive inequality in social life which is now one of the greatest dangers, as well as a great injury, to the State.' Naturally such aspirations disturbed the sleep of those who believed that 'whatever is, is best.' Well might Lord Hartington lament the rate at which they were moving in the Socialist direction!

Renewed sneers and rebukes and reproaches were flung at the offender by prominent journals and politicians but they failed to repress or intimidate Mr. Chamberlain. He agreed with Mr. Cobden that the opposition of *The Times* was an indispensable condition of any successful prosecution of Liberal reform; and he repaid all critics in their own coin, with interest added. 'I am not discouraged,' he said in August, 'I am not repentant.' A month later he boasted that 'like the great Lord Clive,' he was astonished at his own moderation.

In the autumn he made a triumphant tour through the Highlands, where the enthusiasm excited by his speeches reached an enormous height. 'I say that men are born with natural rights, with the right to existence and the right to a fair and reasonable opportunity of enjoying it.' This was the keynote of the gospel which he carried to the crofters, and his words were as manna in the wilderness to men with land-hunger. 'Let us look,' he said, 'this fetish in the face; let us examine these sacred rights of property; let us see on what they are founded; and let us see whether there ought not to be some limitation to the exorbitant pretensions with which they have been accompanied.' The eloquent agitator, in tones which resounded throughout the whole country, denounced a system 'which postpones the good of the community to the interests of individuals, which loses sight altogether of the obligations of property in a servile adulation of its rights;' he complained of rights-of-way being closed; he pro-

posed that the local authorities should have power to take land compulsorily at its fair value and let it for crofters' holdings; he demanded the restriction of deer forests and their special taxation. '*My proposals*,' he remarked, '*have been described by those who think the phrase a sufficient condemnation as Socialistic: but those persons have forgotten to tell you that they are also Christian.*' He lived to admit that the word 'ransom' was not very well chosen, but during his Radical propaganda it represented in his mind the loftiest of doctrines.

The opinion of a friend on his Highland tour may be found in a letter from Dr. Dale.¹ When all men were taking sides for or against the Radical leader, Dr. Dale wrote to him: 'I congratulate you very heartily on your recent speeches in the North; apart from the substance of them, which was admirable, the form—in which I include all the rhetorical elements—reached a level which, I think, you never touched before, and which I hope you will keep. It is a great thing for a man to make an advance of this kind when he has touched fifty.' 'This criticism,' modestly added his friend, 'is rather presumptuous for a person like myself to offer to an ex-Cabinet minister; but the delight one has in watching the growing strength of one's comrades remains when a comrade has become a chief, and when one has lost the right to speak to him in this way.' It would be a libel on Mr. Chamberlain to suspect that his speeches at this period did not represent his genuine feeling. His tone became different in later years, and while some of the unauthorised proposals were carried out with his assistance or support, other reforms advocated in 1885 faded to matters of theory, to questions which he treated 'in the abstract.' But certainly when he extolled them in the hearing of excited multitudes his sincerity was unquestioned. The pathos and the passion he displayed, the eloquence of his speeches and the enthusiasm of his audiences testified to his earnestness.

The pages and pictures of *Punch* show how Mr. Chamberlain had advanced in notoriety. In the early portion of his official career he played a minor rôle. For instance, at the beginning of 1881, in a Twelfth-Night procession at St. Stephen's, he was a page-boy with a basket. Gradually he came to the front and challenged attention as a leading figure. By December, 1883, he was Hamlet, Prince of Birmingham, with Lord Hartington among the players to whom he gave directions. In those days, the cartoonists were inclined to depict him with heavy features and thick lips, and his side whiskers looked clumsy. There is, however, thorough alertness in his figure at the beginning of 1884 when he appears as a juggler, and also a year later in the picture of 'Joey,' the clown, who with the Socialist poker hits 'an old party,' engrossed in *The Times*, and exclaims:—

¹ *Life of R. W. Dale, of Birmingham.*

Whoop! Didn't stolid Harty give a start?
And didn't Pussy Granville give a jump?

In the autumn of 1885 Mr. Chamberlain was the most familiar of *Punch's* companions. One week he and Lord Hartington are out as sportsmen with their guns, the Whig wishing to stick to the old ground and the Radical with a fancy for breaking up new; and in the following week he is engaged in a polo match with Lord Randolph Churchill, the one riding Socialism and the other Tory democracy. He looks smarter when his whiskers disappear, and his face gradually assumes the sharper aspect so familiar in later years.

Mr. Chamberlain's relationship with Mr. Gladstone was much discussed during his advocacy of the unauthorised programme. He was taking the old chief's place in many minds and hearts, and it was assumed that his ambition would not fall short of his opportunities. If, however, he had hoped or expected that there would be an early vacancy in the leadership he was disappointed. Mr. Gladstone's authorized manifesto, in view of the approaching general election, appeared when the Radical agitator was in the north of Scotland. It put an end to the idea of his resignation, and it largely affected his lieutenant's outlook. Mr. Chamberlain's reference to it at Inverness excited surprise. 'I have had,' he said, 'no pretensions at all to lay down any complete or exhaustive Liberal programme. That is the duty of a greater man than I. That duty has been discharged by Mr. Gladstone in the manifesto which he has published, and which will be welcomed throughout the United Kingdom, not merely as a clear and eloquent exposition of Liberal policy, but also as a welcome assurance that the chief who on so many previous occasions has led us to victory will lead us once more in the coming struggle!' A more correct, submissive attitude could not have been taken by a conventional place-man, nor could the most polite and considerate of colleagues have shown better taste. The differences between the two programmes were described by conciliatory people as differences of dimension. A French observer expressed their opinion when he remarked that Mr. Gladstone's programme was a minimum of necessary reforms, Mr. Chamberlain's a maximum of possible reforms. All who wished to see unity in the Liberal party were delighted to think that while holding himself free to advocate his own proposals, the Radical propagandist was ready to co-operate with his famous chief in carrying out the authorised policy so far as it went.

Their satisfaction was of short duration. The belief in Mr. Chamberlain's complaisance was sharply dispelled at a meeting which he addressed in the Victoria Hall, London, on September 24,—a meeting memorable even in the autumn campaign for its enthusiasm. Mr. Chamberlain himself and Mr. Morley, who was chairman, experienced

considerable difficulty in obtaining admission on account of the large crowd at the doors, twenty stewards being required to clear a passage for them. The popular agitator was greeted with the most fervent cheers. He was a conquering hero. Fresh from his tour in Scotland he looked full of vigour and confidence ; his voice surprised some of those who had heard it only a few months previously. It displayed a richness and variety of tone of which many persons had considered it incapable.

The matter of the two programmes was dealt with discreetly by the chairman. Lord Iddesleigh (as Sir Stafford Northcote had become) had remarked that the old moon lying in the lap of the new moon was a sign of squally weather, whereupon Mr. Morley retorted that Liberals ought to be able to make a great many stars out of their old moon. Mr. Chamberlain, however, was not now content to be a star. He had changed since he was at Inverness. After dealing with such projects as free education and the compulsory acquisition of land, he said : ' Whether they will be included in the programme of the Liberal party or not does not depend upon me. It does not depend upon any individual leader, however influential and highly placed he may be. It rests with the constituencies themselves and their representatives.

. . . If I am right these views will find adequate expression, and they will receive due weight and attention from the party leaders. If I am disappointed, then my course is clear. I cannot press the views of the minority against the conclusions of the majority of the party ; but it would be, on the other hand, dishonourable in me, and lowering the high tone which ought to prevail in public life, if I, having committed myself personally, as I have done, to the expediency of these proposals, were to take my place in any Government which excluded them from its programme.'

This announcement, which Mr. Morley, in less sympathetic days, described as melodramatic, suited the ardent temper of the Radicals in the Victoria Hall, but disappointed the peace-makers of the party, and the Whigs commented on it in the tone of men who found their worst fears justified. It sounded like a direct appeal to the electors to choose between Mr. Chamberlain's programme and another programme—to choose between himself and the old chief. Unfriendly critics said he was trying to drive Mr. Gladstone into retirement. Fifteen years later he told a famous journalist that in 1885 he was certainly resolved to be Prime Minister in the Liberal succession.¹ But, as some observers who were shrewd as well as charitable recognized at the time, the appeal was not necessarily against Mr. Gladstone. Perhaps Mr. Chamberlain was merely guarding the succession against the Whigs who were struggling for control of the party policy. It might

¹ *Sixty Years in the Wilderness*, by Sir Henry Lucy.

well be that he cared much more for policy than for position. On October 1, at Bradford, he replied to the accusation that he was dictating terms to the party and its leader. 'Office for me,' he said, 'has no attraction unless it be made to serve the cause I have undertaken to promote, and if that reward is denied me, or is beyond my grasp, I will be content to leave to others the spoils of victory.' A week later he visited Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden, but from the point of view of an agreement on policy the meeting proved useless.

Some of his latter-day followers would have consigned to oblivion the speeches of his Radical prime, but not only were they printed in the newspapers but they were collected in a volume, issued at the end of 1885, which was edited by Sir H. W. Lucy; and it was noted that he had been good enough to look over the proofs. The editor wrote that, 'the almost meteoric movement that Mr. Chamberlain has made on the political horizon within the last ten years justifies the belief that his career is bounded only by the attainment of the highest office in the State open to an English citizen.' The speeches in the volume indicated the policy which, if he had reached that office in his Radical days, he would have carried out. They included the 'toil not, neither do they spin' speech; the plain words to peers at Denbigh; the Ransom declaration; and several of the orations of the autumn of 1885.

The attacks of Conservative statesmen and moderate Liberals became sharper and sharper as the struggle drew towards the first election in which the new voters were to take part. Their language was described by Mr. Chamberlain as malignant and scurrilous. He was denounced as an anarchist, and accused of the policy of Jack Sheppard; Mr. Goschen sneered at the Radicals whom he led as the Salvation Army of politics; Lord Salisbury, whose cool contempt was exasperating, ridiculed his land proposals as those of inveterate Cockneys who had never gone beyond a smoky town or the neighbourhood of a big town hall, and declared that his doctrines of ransom were no new discovery; they were the common property of every barbarous and uncivilized Government since the beginning of the world. To Jack Cade he was compared by Lord Iddesleigh. 'I hope,' said that noble lord at Aberdeen on Sept. 22, 'it will not offend many of his friends when I say that it struck me when I read some of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches in which he expressed his admiration for those who taught that the lower and working classes of this country were better off in the 15th century than they are now that he would have had considerable sympathy with the great popular leader, John Cade.'

Fighting the battle of Radicalism with a courage, an ardour, and an ability which excited the amazement of the whole country and the admiration of a host of followers, Mr. Chamberlain returned quite as hard blows as he received. There was an air of mockery in his

replies to the Whigs. Feelings which had been suppressed in the severe atmosphere of the Cabinet room in Downing Street were relieved in the sympathetic surroundings of the popular platform. When Lord Hartington criticised some parts of the new gospel its exponent made a sharp retort which the political world did not for twenty years let slip into oblivion. 'It is perfectly futile and ridiculous,' he said, 'for any political Rip Van Winkle to come down from the mountain on which he has been slumbering, and to tell us that these things are to be excluded from the Liberal programme. The world has moved on while these dreamers have been sleeping.'

At the critic who was the first to describe his proposals as the unauthorised programme, he flung equally stinging personal allusion. 'Mr. Goschen is very great at finding difficulties, but he would be greater still if he would only remember that it is the business of a statesman to overcome them. To scent out difficulties in the way of every reform—that is the congenial task of a man of the world who coldly recognizes the evils from which he does not suffer himself, and reserves his chief enthusiasm for the critical examination of every proposal for their redress, and for a scathing denunciation of the poor enthusiast who will not let well alone, and who cannot preserve the serene equanimity of superior persons :—

Well, well, it's a mercy we have men to tell us
The rights and the wrongs of these things anyhow,
And that Providence sends us oracular fellows
To sit on the fence and slang those at the plough.'¹

On a previous occasion the Radical dictator had said that if Mr. Goschen could not honestly go with the stream the stream would pass him by, and he would be stranded on the beach. This was naturally interpreted by the Whig statesman as an order to stand aside, but Mr. Chamberlain sarcastically pretended: 'We cannot spare him. He performs in the Liberal party the useful part of the skeleton at the Egyptian feasts. He there is to repress our enthusiasm and to moderate our joy.' Allusions to Rip Van Winkle and the skeleton at the feast were recalled in many controversies, sometimes by one party, sometimes by another, but the statesmen thus described spent a considerable portion of their mature and tolerant lives as the allies and colleagues of the impatient reformer, and if they recalled the gibes it may have been only as subjects for jest.

The retorts to Conservative critics were characterised by political

¹ Wal, it's a marcy we've gut folks to tell us
The rights an' the wrongs o' these matters, I vow,—
God sends country lawyers, an' other wise fellers
To start the world's team wen it gits in a slough.
—(*The Biglow Papers.*)

rather than personal feeling. Mr. Chamberlain professed to receive in very good part the comparison which 'so good-tempered an opponent' as Lord Iddesleigh instituted between himself and Mr. John Cade, who at least, as Mr. Morley pointed out, had this resemblance with him that the initials of his name were the same. 'Knowing as I do,' he said, 'of what Tory misrepresentation is capable, I am inclined to think that Jack Cade was an ill-used and much misunderstood gentleman who happened to have a sympathy with the poor and the oppressed, and who therefore was made the mark for the malignant hatred of the aristocratic and land-owning classes, who combined to burlesque his opinions and to put him out of the way.' Lord Salisbury's reference to inveterate Cockneys galled a politician who was born in Camberwell. He replied by ridiculing the idea that no one was entitled to form an opinion on agricultural questions except members of 'that fortunate but limited class which has contrived to obtain for its exclusive possession the greater part of the land of the country, and which has had, owing to our imperfect representative system, an altogether disproportionate influence in legislation.' He could not recollect any great or beneficent reform which had emanated from the landed gentry nor one which had not received their persistent hostility. It was, he added, two 'inveterate Cockneys'—Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden—who aroused the nation to a sense of the iniquities of a system which taxed the bread of the people in order to raise the rents of the landlords.

On every opportunity Mr. Chamberlain continued passionately to preach 'the gospel of political humanity.' Rebuking the 'convenient cant of selfish wealth' he became, in a sense, the Friend of Humanity like the Knife-Grinder whom he quoted in one of his earliest gibes at Mr. Gladstone.¹ In a thrilling voice, which was echoed in every corner of the land, he expressed the feelings of the class which had hitherto been almost dumb. At a great meeting at Bradford in connection with the National Liberal Federation, he repeated the stern warning of Longfellow :—

There is a poor blind Samson in this land,
Shorn of his strength and bound in bonds of steel,
Who may in some grim revel raise his hand
And shake the pillars of this commonweal.

Frequently in those days he resorted to the poets for language in which to embody his thoughts. In a reply to Lord Salisbury, describing the life of the agricultural labourers, he asserted that it might be said of them as truly as it was in the time of the Corn Law rhymers that they were :—

¹ *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1873.

Landless, restless, joyless, hopeless,
Gasping still for bread and breath,
To their graves by trouble hunted
Albion's Helots toil for death.

On the stop-gap Government Mr. Chamberlain's attacks during the autumn never relaxed. Although Lord Salisbury was Prime Minister, and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach leader of the House of Commons, the chief Conservative electioneerer was Lord Randolph Churchill, whose democratic policy, however embarrassing in practice, was very useful in platform speeches. On all these statesmen the Radical leader poured his copious invective and raillery, his scorn and his sarcasm. Taunting them with the number of aliases they assumed—Constitutionalists, Liberal-Conservatives, Tory democrats—he remarked that the Tories had many previous convictions recorded against them, and asked what proof there was that their recent adversity had exercised a chastening effect. He complained also that they were acting and speaking in office in absolute contradiction to all they said and did in Opposition. 'This was conduct which was lowering to the dignity of public life by whomsoever it was practised.'

An attempt was made to draw Lord Hartington to the Conservative cause. Lord Randolph Churchill expressed the hope that he and other moderates might break away from the Radicals and come over to the opposite party.¹ Mr. Chamberlain, although recently rough in his references to one who had been his colleague, did not on the eve of the election encourage these overtures. On the contrary, he remarked that 'our Liberalism is broad enough and free enough to include within its borders all the friends of progress. We may differ among ourselves, as we have done at every period of our history, as to the order or even as to the nature of the measures that we shall take to give application to our principles, but these difficulties we will settle amongst ourselves and without Tory assistance.' Lord Hartington never yielded to rancour, and never allowed personal feeling to influence his political conduct. He was looking rather to an entire release from active political life than to a new combination, and instead of accepting Lord Randolph's overtures he stated that he had no confidence whatever in the Conservative leaders. This statement he made in the course of a speech in which he protested against Mr. Chamberlain's programme and insisted that no professions should be put forth by the Liberal party which they were not reasonably certain they would be able to fulfil. Mr. Morley had remarked concerning a previous speech by the Whig statesman, that 'a wet blanket was not a good ensign of battle', but in an amiable reply he declared that

¹ When Lord Randolph appealed to Lord Hartington to 'come over and help us,' it was comically suggested, says Mr. Churchill, that the Whig leader wrote to inquire, 'Who's 'us,' and received the answer 'Us is me.'

the necessary political confidence continued to exist between himself and the colleagues with whom he had acted.

In spite of discouragement Lord Randolph persisted in his idea. As early as November, before Mr. Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule was known, he suggested to Lord Salisbury a coalition between the Tories and the Whigs, with Lord Hartington as leader of the House of Commons. The Conservative chief was not in such a hurry as his colleague or did not see so far ahead. He thought the time for a coalition had not come yet, and remarked to Lord Randolph : 'The Whigs hate me as much as they hate you.'¹ Meanwhile the Tory democrat offended the moderate Liberal by comparing him to a boa-constrictor. 'The British public,' he said, 'can trace the digestion and the deglutition by the Marquis of Hartington of the various morsels of the Chamberlain programme which from time to time are handed to him ; and the only difference between the boa-constrictor and the Marquis of Hartington is this—that the boa-constrictor enjoys his food and thrives on it and Lord Hartington loathes his food and it makes him sick.'

Lord Salisbury, who sometimes used the language of the turf, although he may have never seen a race, 'put his money' on the Radical. 'Which of these contending powers of the Liberal party,' he asked, 'is likely to carry the victory? Have you any doubt? You see Mr. Chamberlain, with his decided opinions and his resolute action on the one side, and you see Rip Van Winkle and the skeleton on the other. Do you think that Rip Van Winkle and the skeleton are likely to beat Mr. Chamberlain?' Such rivalry was distasteful to at least one of the leaders. Lord Hartington appealed to Liberals for unity and co-operation, and made the generous admission : 'You want all the energy, all the quick sympathy in the wants and wishes of the people, of Mr. Chamberlain.' To this appeal, while the ballot-boxes were being prepared, the Radical responded with what the Whig aristocrat considered 'patronising protection.' Although Mr. Chamberlain continued to protest against the idea of restricting the Liberal diet to suit Mr. Goschen's 'Conservative digestion,' he admitted that in consideration of Lord Hartington's past services they were bound to do all in their power to meet his views, and if possible overcome his objections. In one respect he also met Mr. Gladstone's wishes, and reassured Liberal Churchmen by stating that there was no chance whatever that the question of disestablishment would receive its final settlement in the Parliament which was about to assemble.

So great, however, had been the disruptive effect of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches that observers doubted if the Moderates and the Radicals

¹ *Lord Randolph Churchill*, by W. S. Churchill.

would ever act together again in office. Lord Hartington himself shared this doubt. 'Chamberlain'—he wrote to Mr. Goschen on December 6—'has evidently no intention of making things easy for a Liberal Government, and after his abominable speech on Thursday I confess I should have great difficulty in sitting in the same Cabinet with him.'¹ The 'abominable' speech was one in which the Radical orator pungently protested against the whittling away of his programme by 'some of those who call themselves our friends.' A powerful organ said during the general election in December that the Liberals had to thank Mr. Chamberlain for the irremediable disruption and hopeless disorganisation of their party with its high historic past and its high claims to national gratitude. 'His achievement,' the oracle added, 'may give him such immortality as was won by the man who burned down the Temple of Diana at Ephesus.' He lived to burn down another Temple, but the censor of 1885 abstained from rebuke in 1905.

¹ *Life of Lord Goschen*, by the Hon. Arthur D. Elliot.

HOME RULE

DESTINY played impishly with Mr. Chamberlain at the close of 1885. He had almost reached the prize when it was drawn hastily from his outstretched hand. In all Radical quarters he was recognized as the heir to the party leadership. The Rev. W. Tuckwell in *Reminiscences of a Radical Parson*, says his influence with the democracy at this time exceeded Mr. Gladstone's; if audiences cheered Mr. Gladstone's name for two minutes they cheered the younger man's for five. An expectation in many minds was frankly expressed in Mr. B. C. Skottowe's *Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, an interesting and careful book published in Birmingham. 'It seems pretty certain,' wrote the author, 'that in the natural course of events the leadership of the Liberal party must soon become vacant, and there is very little reason for doubting that in a comparatively short time Mr. Chamberlain will succeed to the place so long held by Mr. Gladstone, and that the Radical party will be the Liberal party of the future.' Mr. Labouchere, with equal frankness, in a speech at a Radical Club in November 1885, expressed the hope that Mr. Chamberlain would succeed Mr. Gladstone as Prime Minister. It was considered probable that the leadership of the member for Birmingham would deprive Liberalism of the services of Lord Hartington, but the aggressive section, while not ungrateful to the Whig, pressed for the mastery, and felt sure of success. The sphinx, with the secrets of the future, mocked their shortness of vision. New discord, a fresh test of Liberalism, was being prepared by the honoured chief who had counselled warring lieutenants to try to act together.

The riddle of Home Rule and of Mr. Chamberlain's relation to it remain unsolved. His action, when the question was presented in a practical form by Mr. Gladstone, was attributed to ruffled vanity, to pique, to baffled ambition, to jealousy, and to other personal motives. He more than any one else had prepared the public mind for a great scheme of devolution. On the other hand he challenged his opponents to prove that he had ever advocated such a plan as was flung before the Liberal party. His references to the subject had been of a varied character. On the one hand he had insisted on the necessity for a vast extension of local government in Ireland, and on the other hand he

had laid down certain vital restrictions. Much depended on what 'Home Rule' meant, and his interpretation at the period of the proposed legislation did not agree with the interpretation which had been placed on his words by those who wished to realize his aspirations in their own manner.

Mr. Chamberlain admitted, nay boasted, in 1887,¹ that he was a Home Ruler long before Mr. Gladstone. This claim can be easily justified. Speaking as a candidate at Sheffield in January, 1874, the mayor of Birmingham said he held that Irishmen had a right to govern themselves and their own affairs, and he was willing to concede Home Rule. 'It would be an advantage to both parties. The Irish would be satisfied, and the Legislature would move on at an accelerated pace without the Irish members. At present they only travelled by Parliamentary train, and that was not quick enough for him.' This was a characteristic utterance of his ardent days. For a time he used more qualified language after he entered Parliament. Early in 1880, when he may have anticipated his introduction to office, he said, 'I have never voted for inquiry into Home Rule and I do not intend to do so. While I agree with what I believe to be the ends and objects which Home Rule is believed by the Irish members to be likely to secure, I differ altogether from the means by which they propose to secure these ends and objects.' Again at Liverpool in 1881, after eighteen months of Cabinet experience, while he advocated the steering of an even course between extremes, Mr. Chamberlain remarked that he could not contemplate the establishment of a hostile Power within striking distance of England. The Nationalists, however, were encouraged by the language which he began to use in 1883. Standing at the table of the House of Commons in February of that year, he spoke of Ireland as 'a Poland within four hours of our shores,' and an observer on the opposite side (Mr. Chaplin) recorded that there were looks of blank dismay on the Treasury bench when he gave utterance to that 'very foolish and painful statement.' The statement was made the very day after Lord Hartington had declared that the Irish Executive could not safely be deprived of any of its powers. The Radical leader's views on self-government were regarded by the Whig lord as madness.

A scheme for the establishment in Ireland of an elective national Council was early in 1885 submitted to Mr. Gladstone and the Cabinet by Mr. Chamberlain. The Council, as Lord Granville recorded, was to be based on indirect election by the county Boards. Mr. Chamberlain's own explanation, given in a speech at Glasgow, was as follows—

I have proposed that there should be established in Ireland and in Scotland, perhaps also in Wales and in England, national councils for dealing with affairs

¹ Dingwall, April 18, 1887.

which, although they are national, are yet not of imperial concern. I have thought that to such councils might be referred the local control and administration which is now exercised by official Boards in Dublin and in Edinburgh, and by the departments of the Government in London. Perhaps that would be as far as it would be wise to go in the first instance; but if these councils were approved, if the work were satisfactory, then I think we might hereafter even go further, and we might entrust to them the duty of preparing legislation—legislation on national, as contrasted with imperial interests.

In an interview for the *Life of C. S. Parnell* Mr. Chamberlain told Mr. Barry O'Brien that his idea was that the Irish Council should take over the administrative work of all the Boards existing in Dublin. It might, besides, deal with such subjects as land and education and other local matters. A bill passed through the Council should lie on the table of the House of Commons for, say, forty days and then, if nothing was done upon it, it would become law. 'That,' said Mr. Barry O'Brien, 'was a bigger scheme than what one ordinarily understands by local government.' 'Certainly,' replied Mr. Chamberlain, 'it was a very big scheme.' The fact that it was not a mere case of decentralization or devolution to local bodies was pointed out by Mr. Goschen in a letter to Mr. Gladstone. The proposed Councils, as he noted, were to be established 'on the very ground of the existence of national differences in the United Kingdom.'¹

This scheme went too far for the moderate Liberals. A writer in the *Fortnightly*, in an article which Mr. Chamberlain revised, stated that it was assured of the support of the Nationalist leaders, but was rejected owing to the 'unreasonable timidity' of the Whig members of the Cabinet, and Lord Eversley mentions in his book on *Gladstone and Ireland* that 'all the peers plus Lord Hartington were against the scheme; all the Commons in favour of it.' Its rejection widened the rift in the Ministerial lute, and increased the discontent of those Radical statesmen who, as we have seen, added to the troubles of a distressed Government in the Spring of 1885 by objecting to the renewal of the Crimes Act.

A few days before the defeat of the Ministry in June, Mr. Chamberlain urged upon his constituents the importance of giving, in Mr. Gladstone's words, the widest possible self-government to Ireland which was consistent with the maintenance of the integrity of the empire. 'While we have,' he said in careful phrases, 'to conciliate the national sentiment of Ireland, we have to find a safe mean between separation on the one hand—which would be disastrous to Ireland and dangerous to England—and on the other hand that excessive centralization which throws upon the English Parliament, and upon English officials the duty and burden of supervising every petty detail of Irish local affairs.' After the resignation of the Government his desire for

¹ *Life of Lord Goschen*, by the Hon. Arthur D. Elliot.

reform burned fiercer than ever. It was, as he declared, a consolation to Sir Charles Dilke and himself for the blow they had sustained in the House of Commons that their hands were now free, and that their voices might be lifted up in the cause of freedom and of justice. During the interregnum in which Lord Salisbury exacted conditions on his acceptance of office, the Radical leader advocated 'some great measure of devolution under which the Imperial Parliament, while maintaining its supremacy shall relegate to subordinate authorities the control and administration of local business.' He ridiculed the attempt of one nation to interfere with the domestic and social economy of another 'whose genius it does not understand'; and he went on to say: 'I look forward with confidence to the opportunity which will be afforded in the new Parliament for the consideration of this most momentous question, and I believe that in the successful accomplishment of its solution lies the only hope of the pacification of Ireland, and of the maintenance of the strength and integrity of the Empire which are in danger, which are gravely compromised so long as an integral portion of Her Majesty's dominions can only be governed by exceptional legislation, and so long as it in consequence continues to be discontented and estranged.'

While there was still doubt as to whether Mr. Gladstone might not be obliged to resume office, Mr. Chamberlain expressed the belief that the pacification of Ireland depended on the concession to it of the right to govern itself in the matter of its purely domestic business. Language was used by the Radical leader on this occasion which Nationalists adopted as a sort of political charter, and which they flung back at him when they stood on opposite sides of the controversy. 'The existing system of rule in Ireland,' he said, 'is a system which is founded on the bayonets of thirty thousand soldiers encamped permanently as in a hostile country. It is a system as completely centralized and bureaucratic as that with which Russia governs Poland, or as that which was common in Venice under the Austrian rule.' He spoke also of the English government in Ireland as 'a foreign government.'

Over the next scene in the drama an air of mystery hovers. A visit to Ireland was contemplated by Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke, with the view of expounding the Radical policy and directly ascertaining the grievances and the desires of the people. At first the Nationalists who were consulted were encouraging in their attitude, but soon after the accession of the Conservatives to office a change became visible in Mr. Parnell and his colleagues, and Mr. Chamberlain abandoned the project because, as he afterwards asserted, the persons who promised him introductions to the leading members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the representatives of national opinion with-

drew their promises. 'I found that if I went to Ireland I should be boycotted.' Nationalists then pooh-poohed the affair and said the member for Birmingham wished to advertise himself and that he could go or stay as he pleased. Radicals suspected that the change in their mood was due to the great expectations excited by the Conservatives, fostered as these were by an interview which took place in a deserted drawing-room in Grosvenor Square between Lord Carnarvon, the new Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland and Mr. Parnell; and probably the Nationalists and the priests¹ feared the intrusion in their own territory of an English statesman who, whatever might be his sympathy, would naturally look at the Irish question from the point of view of British politics.

The abandonment of the projected visit marked the close of Mr. Chamberlain's championship of Home Rule. It is too much to say that a personal rebuff led to a sudden change in his views on a great question. The incident was a symptom of change rather than its prime cause. Undoubtedly, however, his zeal was chilled by the conduct of his old Irish friends. They dispensed with his championship and he devoted it to other objects.

When Mr. Parnell, excited (as Mr. Gladstone conjectured) by the high biddings of the Tories, raised his terms and demanded the restoration of a national parliament the Radical leader declined to enter into the competition for his alliance. He said on September 8 that this new programme involved a great extension of anything that had been hitherto understood by Home Rule. If it were carried out we should, he argued, establish within less than thirty miles of our own shores a new foreign country, animated from the outset with unfriendly intentions towards ourselves. A policy like that would be disastrous to Ireland, and dangerous to the security of this country, and in the circumstances he held that we were 'bound to take every step in our power to avert so great a calamity.' This was a completely new tone. It revealed an attitude of hostile suspicion instead of the former attitude of sympathy and encouragement. The oppressed Poland within four hours of our shores whose genius England did not understand was to prove an unfriendly foreign country if it received a national parliament!

During the election campaign the Irish question was kept by advocates of the unauthorized programme as far as possible in the background. British reforms—free education, allotments and small holdings, readjustment of taxation, local government in the counties—proved sufficient for electioneering, the cry of three-acres-and-a-cow, with which Mr. Chamberlain's friend, Mr. Jesse Collings, was associated,

¹ An ex-Irish member has stated that he aroused episcopal suspicion with reference to the proposed visit.

specially appealing to the new electors in the rural districts. Instructions were issued on behalf of the Nationalist party to their fellow-countrymen in Great Britain to support Conservative candidates, and Mr. Gladstone on the other hand made a pathetic appeal for the return of 'a party totally independent of the Irish vote.' It has been explained that he desired an independent majority, not to resist the claims of Mr. Parnell but to secure the 'equitable settlement,' which he advocated in his manifesto. He did not obtain it. The Liberals had remarkable victories in the counties, but numerous defeats in the boroughs. The result of the election was satisfactory only to the Nationalists. It made them the holders of the balance in Parliament. There were eighty-six Home Rulers, just enough with the Conservatives to render the ill-assorted allies equal to the Liberals.

Rumours of Mr. Gladstone's readiness to deal with the Irish question began to circulate in the middle of December. On the 17th the Liberal leader wrote in reply to an inquiry from Lord Hartington: 'I consider that Ireland has now spoken; and that an effort ought to be made by the Government without delay to meet her demands for the management by an Irish legislative body of Irish, as distinct from imperial affairs.' Most of the members of the last Liberal Government were as startled as the country at large by so sudden an adoption of a new policy. Although Mr. Gladstone's biography has revealed the fact that his opinions had been tending for a considerable period in this direction, he had given no unmistakable public hint of the fresh moulding of his mind, and indeed, at the end of September he advised Mr. Childers, who wished to make an announcement in favour of Home Rule, not to go beyond general indications. It was believed that his decision was quickened and his action accelerated by the mysterious interview between Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Parnell, about which he had been told, and also by hearing that the Viceroy had informed Mr. McCarthy that there was a chance of the Conservative Government agreeing to an inquiry into Home Rule.

What would be Mr. Chamberlain's attitude? Would he acquiesce in the new policy, or would he resent its interference with his own social programme? It was popularly assumed that, notwithstanding his recent coldness, he could not withhold support from any concession to the Irish which might be proposed by Mr. Gladstone, and this belief was encouraged by a reference which he made to the subject on the day that the first rumour was published. Speaking at the Birmingham Reform Club, he alluded to the Liberal leader's readiness to give to Ireland the largest possible measure of local government that could be proposed consistently with the integrity of the Empire and the supremacy of the Crown, and he stated—'I entirely agree with those principles, and I have so much faith in the experience and patriotism of

Mr. Gladstone, that I cannot doubt that if he should ever see his way to propose any scheme of arrangement I shall be able conscientiously to give it my humble support.' At the same time he declared that in his judgment the time had hardly arrived when the Liberal party could interfere safely, or with advantage, to settle the question. This qualified and guarded statement was strikingly in contrast with Lord Hartington's emphatic protest against the new policy, which Mr. Gladstone read in *The Times* a few days later, 'with no small surprise.'

One of the strange circumstances of the case was that Mr. Gladstone did not consult Mr. Chamberlain. Lord Granville was partly taken into his confidence; he confided his ideas also to Lord Spencer and Lord Rosebery; communications were made to Lord Hartington, and indirectly to Sir William Harcourt, Lord Northbrook, and Lord Derby; but Mr. Chamberlain was ignored. The well-informed Radical parson, whose *Reminiscences* have been already quoted in these pages,¹ mentions a report that certain politicians wrote to Mr. Gladstone proposing to arrange a Liberal programme. He sent them in return a sketch of the Home Rule scheme. In great alarm they went to him. 'Are we to make this public?' 'As you please.' 'Have you shown it to Mr. Chamberlain?' 'I don't care *that* for Mr. Chamberlain.' 'Will you show it to Lord Hartington?' 'I can answer for Lord Hartington.' So the story runs. It is not quite Gladstonian in form, but it has been confirmed by the disclosure that Mr. Chamberlain wrote to Mr. Gladstone for information without getting a direct reply. Although the Liberal chief could not 'answer for' Lord Hartington after the middle of December, his reliance on the Whigs might have explained his apparent indifference to their rival. He might have imagined that the Radicals could not withhold support from a scheme which was acquiesced in by the Moderates, or that if the Moderates supported it he could carry it without the aid of the Radical leader.

Those who search for personal motives suspect that Mr. Gladstone resented the airs with which the unauthorized programme had been presented to the country. Although a magnanimous man, he was also a proud man, and he was leader in act so long as he was leader in name. Mr. Chamberlain had laid down the conditions on which he would take office; he had appealed to the electors on his own proposals; and now Mr. Gladstone formulated an altogether different policy. In these circumstances the chief preferred to take older friends into his confidence. Pride owed no debt to prudence in this matter. The country, however, did not yet concern itself much with these personalities. It was generally assumed at the end of 1885 that a Home Rule scheme would receive no more enthusiastic support than that of the Radical statesman who had vehemently denounced the existing centralized

¹ *Reminiscences of a Radical Parson*, by Rev. W. Tuckwell.

and bureaucratic system of Irish government. His mind, as his letters show, was still busy at this time with his own changing ideas for dealing with the problem. One week he suggested the adoption of the American Constitution ; next week he wrote ¹ that if they were to give way it must be by calling Ireland a protected state, confining England's responsibility to the protection of the country against foreign aggression and providing Ireland with a Governor (empowered to dissolve Parliament), a Senate and a House of Commons.

¹ *Life of Henry Labouchere*, Algar Thorold.

XVI

THE CROSS ROADS

THE new Parliament which assembled on January 12, 1886, was the shortest and one of the most important in recent times, changing the fortunes of statesmen and the characters of great parties. Things were never again as they were when it met. From first to last it was a Parliament of strange, unsettling, dramatic events. It marked off the Parliaments which went before from those which followed after. It saw the introduction of a project which deeply influenced the politics of the country for a quarter of a century, it saw two sections lopped off from the Liberal party, and it saw several of the leading men in that party forsaking old colleagues and seeking new comrades. And the statesman whom it most affected was Mr. Chamberlain. It was, in a special sense, the turning-point of his career.

As the Conservatives, who relied, till the elections were over, on the ordinary law in Ireland, were again devising coercion, and as Mr. Gladstone, on the other hand, was willing to examine the demand now made through five-sixths of her representatives for a national legislature, Mr. Parnell and his followers arranged to vote with the Liberals in order to turn out the Salisbury Government which they had brought into existence seven months previously. The instrument chosen was not an Irish motion, but an amendment submitted by Mr. Jesse Collings in favour of the scheme of allotments and small holdings, popularly known as the policy of three-acres-and-a-cow. Mr. Gladstone having supported the amendment, Mr. Goschen ironically congratulated his 'triumphant friend,' the member for West Birmingham,¹ on the officious adoption of this item of the unauthorized programme, and Mr. Arthur Balfour described the debate as the concluding scene of a drama acted during the previous six months, in which the Whig and the Radical had been struggling over the body of the Liberal leader. Neither Mr. Balfour nor his colleagues imagined that the Radical might become their ally. Mr. Chaplin and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach scolded him for the 'mischievous,' the 'astounding,' promises he had given to the agricultural labourers. 'It is,' said Sir Michael, who was then leader of the House, 'of a piece with his past conduct that he should use

¹ Birmingham was divided into seven constituencies under the Redistribution Act and Mr. Chamberlain was returned for the West Division.

this motion as a party move to turn the Government out of office.'

Although Lord Hartington and a group of his Whig followers, knowing what lay behind this movement, voted with the Conservatives, and a larger section of Liberals took no part in the division, the three-acres-and-a-cow amendment was carried by a majority of seventy-nine. Lord Salisbury consequently resigned, and the way was cleared by Mr. Chamberlain for the return to power of a statesman who was sympathetically considering the demand for Home Rule. His own disposition to govern Ireland according to Irish ideas was shown by an article in the *Fortnightly*, in which it was recommended that Mr. Parnell or Mr. Healy should be invited to become Chief Secretary. 'Mr. Parnell himself,' the writer said, 'should be challenged in the interests of his constituents, to take up the burden of office, and to co-operate with English statesmen in the solution of a problem—(the land question)—which lies at the root of Irish misery and Irish discontent. . . . If the leader of the Irish party shrinks from this responsibility, as his enemies proclaim that he will, an offer should be made, in turn, to other chiefs of the National party, some of whom, and notably Mr. Healey,¹ have shown a remarkable constructive capacity and resource.' The article was signed merely 'A Radical,' but Mr. Morley in a speech a few months after its appearance attributed the authorship to Mr. Chamberlain. His suggestion as to the Chief Secretaryship was not carried out. The post was given, not to an Irish Nationalist, but to Mr. Morley, who devoted heart and brain to Mr. Gladstone's service.

Again, as in 1880, there were surmises and speculations with regard to Mr. Chamberlain's position. On the formation of the former Liberal Government politicians had wondered if he would receive office. Now they wondered what post he would take. Six years had left deep marks on the Liberal party, and while time had destroyed several reputations it had raised Mr. Chamberlain to the rank of a leader who might expect to make his own terms. With the Caucus he assisted to secure the victory of 1880; with the unauthorized programme he enabled the Liberals to regain office in the new Parliament. No position seemed beyond the reach of the statesman who stood second only to Mr. Gladstone in the esteem of the party throughout the country. Nevertheless he accepted a secondary post.

The office which he was offered by the Prime Minister was that of First Lord of the Admiralty, but this he declined on the plea that 'it was hardly congenial or consistent with a Radical's position that he should occupy the headship of one of the great spending and fighting offices of the State.'² He preferred to go to the Local Government

¹ Mr. Healy's name was, strange to say, spelt wrongly in the article.

² It was through the doors of the Admiralty that his son entered the official arena.

Board, because there he might be able to do something to carry out the policy which he supported before the General Election. In taking this post, which had been occupied for half a year by Mr. Arthur Balfour, he proved his disregard for money, the salary attached to it being then only £2,000 as compared with £5,000 in the case of the First Lordship of the Admiralty. Some of his critics, however, said he was so rich that a few thousands did not matter much, and others convinced themselves in the light of after events that he foresaw he would not draw any salary very long.

Was Mr. Chamberlain disappointed? The popular impression at the time is recorded in *An Autobiography* by Dr. Guinness Rogers, who, although a whole-hearted supporter of the Home Rule Scheme, admits that if Mr. Gladstone had been a little disposed to recognize his remarkable ability, the Liberal party might have been saved from the terrible disaster which followed. Mr. Sexton asserted in the House of Commons, in 1886, that the Radical leader desired the Secretaryship for the Colonies, and Lord Granville subsequently expressed a doubt, as Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice states in his biography, whether he himself had adopted a wise course in accepting that office because he arrived at the conclusion that Mr. Chamberlain might have occupied it, and that in that event some of Mr. Gladstone's subsequent difficulties might have been diminished or modified. If the member for West Birmingham was ambitious to be Colonial Secretary he waited for nine years to gratify his ambition. Mr. Gladstone appears to have heard that he coveted the Irish Secretaryship which could not at that time be given to him without irritating the Nationalists who had lost confidence in their former friend. On the other hand Mr. Morley remarks that he was not much concerned about the particular office. 'Whatever its place in the hierarchy, he knew that he could trust himself to make it as important as he pleased.'¹

On account of the attitude which he adopted a few weeks later, Mr. Chamberlain's acceptance of office was much canvassed. Lord Hartington, Mr. Goschen and Sir Henry James declined to join the Government, the last-named exciting the surprise of all who held a low view of the political convictions of Parliamentary lawyers by his self-denial in refusing the Lord Chancellorship as well as the Home Secretaryship. The conduct of these statesmen was afterwards contrasted favourably with Mr. Chamberlain's. His critics asserted that he must have known that he could not remain in the Government, and that he entered it to spy out the policy of the Prime Minister. This was an insinuation which he resented. When offered office, he frankly expressed doubt as to whether in view of Mr. Gladstone's

¹ *Life of Gladstone.*

intentions with regard to Ireland, he could be of service in the new Administration. According to his judgment it would not be found possible to reconcile the conditions which the Prime Minister had laid down as to the security of the Empire and the supremacy of Parliament with the establishment of a national legislative body sitting in Dublin, and he indicated his own preference for an attempt to come to terms with the Irish members on the basis of a more limited scheme of local government, coupled with proposals for a settlement of the land, and perhaps also of the education question. Being assured, however, that he would have 'unlimited liberty of judgment and rejection' on any scheme that might be proposed, and declaring his readiness to give an unprejudiced examination to the more extensive proposals that might be made, he accepted a place in the Government. The conditions of his acceptance he set out in a letter to 'My dear Mr. Gladstone,' on January 30, and he informed the House of Commons that all that the Prime Minister asked his colleagues to do was to join with him in an inquiry and examination as to how far it was or was not practicable to meet the wishes of the great proportion of the Irish people, to form something in the nature of a legislative body sitting in Dublin. 'I told the Prime Minister that this was an inquiry of which I approved, and which indeed I thought had become indispensable.'

At Downing Street the President of the Local Government Board found congenial company. While the moderate Liberals, with whom he had waged war, were absent, Sir William Harcourt had become Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Rosebery was Foreign Secretary, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman Secretary for War, and his fellow-fighter in the Sheffield contest, Mr. Mundella, was President of the Board of Trade. Among other personal friends was Mr. Morley, who began an official career in circumstances trying to Mr. Chamberlain. Their lives had touched at many points. Twelve or thirteen years had passed since the then editor of the *Fortnightly* made the acquaintance of the aspiring Birmingham politician; he had more recently advocated in the *Pall Mall Gazette* the policy pursued by the Radical leader, and when Mr. Chamberlain introduced him to the House in 1883, they looked forward to intimate association in its work. Each liked, admired and respected the other. Mr. Chamberlain, praising Mr. Morley in April, 1885, said his *Life of Burke* would 'make us regret that he had ever left the pleasant paths of literature for the thorny road of politics, if he had not given us some evidence that in his new career he will do as great or even more signal service than in his old one.' Now in a sense they were rivals—rivals for influence over Mr. Gladstone, or at any rate rivals in shaping Liberal policy. Tenniel depicted them in the 'Pas de Fascination.' Signor Gladstonio dances

with Madame Josephine and Signorina Morleena ; and to the latter he gives the bouquet.

The veteran in old age was drawn to the man of letters, from whom he differed sharply on some of the highest themes. It was peculiarly true in their case, according to the Carlyle formula, that except in opinion they did not disagree. When they agreed in opinion also their personal sympathy rendered their union very close and touching. Mr. Morley loved the 'grand old man' with an affection which grew with intimacy, and his career was henceforth intertwined with Mr. Gladstone's. In the company of the skilled veteran he was an active, animated, confident, powerful Parliamentarian ; when Mr. Gladstone retired, Mr. Morley became silent, less sanguine, more inclined to live apart. It was in 1886 perhaps that he made the greatest impress on political history, for then he did much to sway the Prime Minister and to shape the most important measure of our time. Then unfortunately his relations with his old Radical friend became strained.

A glimpse into the inner life of the Cabinet soon after it was formed has been given by Mr. Chamberlain. Having an interview with the Prime Minister, he ventured to say to him : ' Mr. Gladstone, I suppose you are now conducting the inquiry into the demands of the Irish members which you have undertaken to make. I do not know at what conclusion you have arrived, but I think it my duty to tell you what is my honest and sincere conviction if you should decide to introduce a measure to establish a separate Parliament in Ireland. You will be beaten in the House of Commons, and you will be beaten in the country.' Mr. Gladstone said to him, with all the emphasis which he used when he was interested in a subject : ' I shall never go to the country upon this subject. I do not know at what conclusion—I have not made up my mind—I ought to arrive. But if it should be the one you indicate I will put my views and propositions before the House of Commons, and accept their decision. But I would never appeal to the country on such a matter. I would not take that responsibility, knowing it would break up the Liberal party, that it would dissolve old friendships and be a calamity.' This conversation proved a lack of confidence. Mr. Gladstone subsequently informed the House that long before the Home Rule scheme was submitted to the Cabinet 'the subject of the Bill, and its leading details, had been matter of anxious consideration between himself and his nearest political friends.' Among these Mr. Chamberlain was not included. When the time came to speak out he complained bitterly that the Prime Minister did not even take his colleagues into his confidence. Liberals justified this reticence in his own case on the ground that he was an unsympathetic member of the Government ; but he was there on the invitation of its chief.

On March 13 a Home Rule Bill was mentioned in the Cabinet, and events marched rapidly to the catastrophe. Rumour of Ministerial dissension became the daily excitement of politicians. One day they learned that Mr. Chamberlain had resigned; next day a compromise was reported; and on the third day a rupture was declared inevitable; and thus the uncertainty was maintained. Rumour proved a more reliable jade than usual. Resignation was tendered, withheld, and finally insisted upon. On March 15, immediately after definite Irish proposals were formulated in the Cabinet, Mr. Chamberlain offered to resign. A scheme of land purchase which was submitted would, in his opinion, commit the British taxpayer to tremendous obligations, accompanied with serious risk of ultimate loss. He gathered also that the Prime Minister was now convinced of the necessity of conceding a separate legislative assembly to Ireland with full powers to deal with all Irish affairs, and to this policy he opposed his own public utterances and conscientious convictions, but as he explained to the House of Commons, he 'did not resign upon the scheme of Home Rule alone'; he tendered his resignation in consequence of the production of the Land Bill. At the Prime Minister's request he postponed the decisive step, but when Mr. Gladstone made a statement to the Cabinet on the Home Rule scheme on March 26, he repeated his resignation and it was accepted the next day.

Thus Mr. Chamberlain was scarcely two months in the Government, and apparently he had not been at any time within its inner circle. So far as the evidence of speeches and published letters goes Mr. Gladstone took no great pains to conciliate him. The masterful chief may have considered that the ideas of his colleague could not be merged in his own. Either the one or the other must prevail. Mr. Gladstone proceeded upon his own course, and Mr. Chamberlain parted from him for ever.

Now and again the Radical statesman appeared to look back, but he never turned. The Liberals lost in him a politician of amazing resource and dexterity, a matchless electioneer, and a debater who in the modern style has never been surpassed. On his own part he lost irrecoverably the succession to the Liberal leadership. The breach which was begun in 1886 gradually widened, and while the majority of the party treated Mr. Chamberlain as a deserter, he assisted in driving the followers of Mr. Gladstone into the wilderness and in keeping them there many years.

XVII

THE QUARREL

FROM resignation to attack on political colleagues the journey is as a rule tragically short. 'Political friendships, when paths diverge are,' as Lord Rosebery has testified, 'more difficult to maintain than men themselves realize at the moment of separation.' Lamentable bitterness was displayed in the controversies between Mr. Chamberlain and old comrades, and some of those who had been most closely attached to him reviled him most. Their familiar accusation, in the words of Sir William Harcourt, was that 'he had no objections to Home Rule but objected to Mr. Gladstone carrying it out.' 'His grievance,' said an Irish member to his face, 'is that he is not Prime Minister of England.' This taunt was revived as late as 1905 by Mr. Labouchere, who may have forgotten that he did his best to puff up Mr. Chamberlain in 1885 by reports of his popularity. 'In his Radical days,' wrote the owner of *Truth*, 'he was somewhat jealous of Mr. Gladstone, and somewhat disposed to rebel against his great influence with the Liberal party. When, therefore, Mr. Gladstone declared himself in favour of Home Rule, his lieutenant declared himself against it.' The imputation of jealousy started by a section of politicians living in a heated party atmosphere was sorrowfully repeated by many simple Radical electors, who were unable to reconcile the action of Mr. Chamberlain with the former speeches of the man in whom they had placed so much hope. His adherents, on the other hand, pointed out that if he were really a self-seeking monster influenced by personal ambition and dominated by desire to grasp the highest position, he must have made a miscalculation which would be inconceivable in so clever a tactician, seeing that if he had remained with Mr. Gladstone he would have been his successor and that by separating himself from the Government he forfeited his heritage. To this his critics retorted that he had been carried away by the success of his unauthorized programme, that he was in too great a hurry to seize the leadership, and that he still expected to secure the support of the mass of the Radicals.

No sooner was he out of the Government at the end of March, 1886, than he discussed his views and plans with Lord Randolph Churchill who, as a democrat in sympathy with some of his aspira-

tions, formed a link between the arch-Radical and the Conservatives. 'The two men dined together often,' as we learn from Mr. Churchill; 'they corresponded freely, they consulted almost every day.' Lord Randolph kept the Marquis of Salisbury informed as to 'the great Joe,' 'my friend Joe,' and 'Joe's conversation,' so that the Tory chief was familiar with the outline of Mr. Gladstone's scheme before it was introduced. It appeared that from the middle of February till his resignation at the end of March, 'Joe' had not exchanged a word with his colleague, Mr. John Morley. But while off with his old love, he was not yet on with the new. There was naturally a want of confidence between himself and the Whig leader. Lord Hartington was 'rather fluttered, for fear he should be cut out by Chamberlain taking the lead,' and the services of the Tory democrat (who himself showed an absence of personal jealousy) were required in order to secure an arrangement between the two Liberal statesmen even as to the order of debate. 'I am certain,' he wrote to the Radical Unionist, 'Hartington means nothing but what is right and fair towards you, but you know there are one or two round him who are very jealous of you.' Lord Randolph Churchill also assured Mr. Chamberlain that he had many friends among the Conservatives and at the same time encouraged the latter to put trust in their former adversary. He persuaded his 'friend Joe' and Lord Salisbury to meet. The Turf Club was the neutral ground selected. 'Thither Lord Salisbury repaired—not, as it appears, without trepidation and misgivings—and in the little dingy downstairs room where visitors are received was begun that strange alliance afterwards so powerfully to affect the course of history.'¹

The pain of 'a separation from one whom I have followed and honoured for so many years' was alluded to by Mr. Chamberlain in the debate on the first reading of the Home Rule Bill. Mr. Gladstone introduced it on April 8. Next day his resigned Radical colleague rose from the corner of the second bench below the gangway—the corner usually occupied by Mr. Bright. Across the gangway sat Lord Hartington in the place left vacant by Mr. Forster, who died four days before the victorious opponent of his administration explained his own dissent from a later development of Irish policy. Around Mr. Chamberlain were sore and sorrowing friends; Nationalists on the opposite side scowled at him; Ministers on the Treasury bench were vigilant; occupants of the front Opposition bench, who had been bruised by his numerous blows, watched the strange scene with piquant curiosity and satisfaction. It was suggested that, observing the onslaught made by the Roderigo of Birmingham upon

¹ *Lord Randolph Churchill*, by W. S. Churchill.

Mr. Gladstone, the Cassio of Midlothian, Lord Randolph Churchill might say—

Now, whether he kill Cassio
Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
Every way makes my gain.

The key to Mr. Chamberlain's claim to consistency lay in his contention that Mr. Gladstone's scheme meant separation and not Home Rule. Reviewing Mr. Churchill's biography of his father in January, 1906, the *Athenæum*, which was owned by Sir Charles Dilke, stated that the phrase 'Home Rule' was used among politicians before July, 1885, in a wholly different sense from that in which it has been used since the early part of 1886. The phrase in the former period, it appears, stood for milder schemes than an Irish parliament; and 'with this key,' the writer said, 'it is possible to unlock the secrets of the early summer of 1885.' Mr. Chamberlain's own Home Rule, however, was not a mild affair. He had suggested a National Council for Ireland, a system based on the American Constitution, the making of Ireland a protected state with a Governor, a Senate and a House of Commons, and also a process of federation on the Canadian pattern.

At the crisis in 1886 Mr. Chamberlain was still unashamed of the name of Home Ruler, and he did not yet treat the difference with his old friends as involving a permanent schism in the party. On April 16, while specially attacking the Land Purchase Bill, but referring generally to Irish policy, he expressed the hope that his separation from Mr. Gladstone might be for only a short time. 'I am not an irreconcilable opponent,' he said, amid the loud cheers of Liberals who thought they saw signs of repentance.

This utterance was specially significant, in view of the fact that two days previously in Her Majesty's Opera House Lord Hartington and other Whig opponents of Home Rule had stood on the same political platform as Lord Salisbury. In the first visible alliance between the two parties Mr. Chamberlain did not take any part. Indeed he told his Liberal fellow-townsmen at Easter that his opposition to the bill was only conditional. 'If certain alterations were made, all the anomalies which I have described to you, most of the objections which I have taken, would disappear.' He emphatically declared his party loyalty. 'I am not going,' he said, 'to enter any cave; I am not going to join any coalition of discordant elements and parties.' Mr. Linley Sambourne in *Punch* depicted him at dinner at the Conservative leader's in Arlington Street. Lord Salisbury, assisting him to Irish stew, says: 'If you'll come to me, I'll give you my receipt for the dish.' 'No, thank you, my lord,' replies Mr. Chamberlain; 'there's such a lot of pepper in it that it quite overpowers the pleasant flavour of the Union.' He thought, rather,

that for a time he would have to occupy a solitary position, remarking to a friend that 'if the worst comes to the worst I can always go back to my private life.'¹

On one point Mr. Gladstone corroborated his personal vindication. It had been suggested that he joined the Government with the pre-conceived determination to leave it at the first opportunity. 'That statement,' Mr. Chamberlain warmly declared, 'is not only untrue but it is ridiculous,' and the Prime Minister uttered a distinct 'hear, hear.' Similar generosity was not shown by all from whom he differed. Mr. Healy, for instance, accused him of trying to deal a deadly blow at Mr. Gladstone, and with equal bitterness on another occasion denounced him as the ally of the Tories, the confederate of the Whigs, the deserter of his party. Day after day, and in every Irish debate, he was told by Radicals as well as by Nationalists that in retiring from the Government and in opposing the Home Rule Bill he was animated by personal spite and spleen.

A crisis in Mr. Chamberlain's connexion with Birmingham occurred at the meeting of the Liberal Two Thousand, on April 21. There was a struggle for the local mastery between himself and the representatives of the official Liberal party. Many of those present were divided between allegiance to the head of the party and confidence in the fellow-citizen of whom they were so proud. Mr. Chamberlain, while professing conciliatory sentiments on the principle of Home Rule, criticized Mr. Gladstone's two Irish measures with great dexterity and power. A safe motion which Mr. Schnadhorst submitted, declaring that he had been guided by a high sense of personal honour and of public duty, was passed with enthusiasm, and then a struggle in tactics took place. Those who desired to prevent any breach with Mr. Gladstone pressed for an adjournment on the question of principle, but the resigned minister, recognizing that the meeting was with him, appealed for an immediate decision. 'Hitherto,' he said, 'you men of Birmingham have led the van. . . . I ask you for guidance and counsel.' Dr. Dale pleaded that they had not been accustomed to force a vote, but Mr. Jesse Collings rejoined that it was not the practice of Birmingham to wait. As usual, Mr. Chamberlain prevailed and, striking while the iron was hot, he received a vote of confidence from an overwhelming majority. Thus he committed the Association to his course.

Testimony to his disinterestedness was given in a conciliatory speech by Dr. Dale. 'I do not believe,' he said with a rather sorrowful heart, 'that Mr. Chamberlain could have honourably remained in the Cabinet. But I protest—I protest most earnestly—against those who treat this great subject as though it were a question whether

¹ *Memoirs of Fifty Years*, Lady St. Helier.

we should follow the leadership of Mr. Chamberlain or of Mr. Gladstone. We need them both.' The high-minded preacher went on to remark that 'the Liberal party had a right to demand Mr. Chamberlain's judgment at such a time as this—his frank and honest judgment. He has given it. He would have been a traitor to us, a traitor to his chief, a traitor to his country, if he had not given it frankly.' In a letter to Mr. Gladstone, who thanked him for his friendly utterance, Dr. Dale wrote: 'I need not say how great a grief it is to me that Mr. Chamberlain should have been bound in honour—as I think he was—to leave the Ministry at such a time as this. I have worked with him for eighteen years, and though, of course, I have seen less of him since he became a minister, our relations, which have often been extremely intimate, have been maintained. As the result of his temperament, education and environment—all so different from your own—he was certain to approach nearly every political question with different assumptions, and in a different spirit, and to deal with them in a different method. But I know that when he entered the Ministry he was drawn to you very strongly, and it seems to me a calamity that his future political life should miss the benefit it would derive from continued work under your leadership.'

When personal and political ties were snapping under the strain of the dissensions which had been raised, Mr. Chamberlain entreated his constituents so to continue the discussion that when the time of trial was passed they might once more unite, without embittered memories, without unkind reflections, to carry forward the great work upon which hitherto they had been unanimous. The appeal was made in vain. Example was called for rather than precept. One side threw the responsibility on the other, but whichever was to blame, the fact certainly was that the dispute was conducted by both sections with fierce vehemence and intense bitterness. Mr. Chamberlain was irritated by aspersions on his motives, and on the other hand many of his old friends were exasperated by the cheers which he courted from the Tories who so recently had denounced him as a danger to the State. Those who, like Dr. Dale, tried to follow both leaders found that they were going in different directions.

Doubt was subsequently cast by Mr. Chamberlain himself on the sincerity of his conciliatory professions. Although he opposed the scheme for buying out the Irish landlords and creating a peasant proprietary he believed that in principle this was the right way to settle the agrarian question. His main object, he confessed, was to kill the Home Rule Bill. Still he felt the necessity of keeping up appearances for the sake of his friends in the country. A cynical view of his attitude as well as Mr. Gladstone's is presented in a letter written by Lord Randolph Churchill on the morrow of the Land

Purchase debate. 'Gladstone,' Lord Randolph said, 'is pretending to make up to Joe, in order to pass his bill; and Joe is pretending to make up to Gladstone, in order to throw out his bill. Diamond cut diamond.'

As long, however, as the bill was before the House of Commons and the country, Mr. Chamberlain continued to indicate that his opposition was conditional. In this respect he differed from Lord Hartington, whose opposition was fundamental. On May 6 the Radical statesman wrote that 'the key of the position was to maintain the representation of Ireland in the imperial Parliament and her full responsibility for all imperial affairs.' This 'key' he abandoned seven years later, but in the first conflict he expressed the hope that if the concession which is suggested were made the 'imminent danger of a fatal breach in the ranks of the Liberal party might be happily averted.'

Negotiations were carried on through the medium of Mr. Labouchere, an old Radical admirer, who was still anxious that Mr. Chamberlain should be 'the Elisha of the aged Elijah,' and at one point the issue seemed hopeful. Mr. Chamberlain gathered from the go-between on May 8 that the retention of the Irish members was to be granted. At any rate he assumed that the concession was made and he sent a telegram to several friends announcing the 'surrender' of the Prime Minister. This indiscretion led to anxious inquiries at Downing Street, and the reply obtained was treated as a contradiction. There was suspicion on both sides. Members of the Government resented what they considered an attempt on Mr. Chamberlain's part to coerce them and he in turn was sceptical as to their disposition to meet him.

The Whig and Radical opponents of the bill were gradually organized for the purpose of united resistance. As the struggle proceeded the Radical leader entered into close consultation with the Whig statesman with whom he had a few months previously conducted a stiff and stern dispute with regard to the whole tendency of Liberal policy. Together they planned the defeat of their common chief. On May 12 fifty-two members met Mr. Chamberlain in conference. Next day Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman stated on behalf of the Government in the House of Commons that they were willing to 'consider with the most friendly mind all suggestions that might be made for enabling the Irish members to take part in our discussions,' but Mr. Chamberlain was quite dissatisfied with this intimation. When he heard it he tore up the notes which he had taken and walked out. On the 14th he attended a meeting at Devonshire House where sixty-four Liberals assembled, and hostile arrangements were continued by the two sections of 'dissentients.' Social influences were effectively employed on the Unionist side. Statesmen who had hitherto ignored

obscure members now stooped to 'lobby' and solicit support. The combined influence of Whig and Radical proved formidable.

One severe check, however, was sustained by Mr. Chamberlain. The Caucus, which had been so powerful an instrument in his hands, turned against him. At a meeting of the Council of the National Liberal Federation on May 15 his Birmingham friends were defeated, and an amendment was carried by a very large majority approving of the bill and assuring Mr. Gladstone of earnest support. Having to choose between the old leader and the younger politician who had taken the most conspicuous part in its foundation it stood by the former, and at the same time the experienced organizer, Mr. Schnadhorst, who had been associated with Mr. Chamberlain in many movements, threw in his lot with the Prime Minister.

While debate on the second reading was conducted in a great style, and while negotiations were still flickering, an adroit suggestion by Mr. Gladstone weakened for a time the position of the Radical Unionists. At a meeting of the Liberal party on May 27 the Prime Minister said that all that the Government desired at that stage was to establish the principle of the Bill and if the second reading were passed it would be withdrawn and a new measure introduced in an autumn session. In a sharp debate the Conservatives brought into prominence the fact that the promise of reconstruction applied only to the clauses dealing with the position of the Irish representatives; but as this was the section on which the opposition of Radical Unionists had been concentrated, Mr. Chamberlain appeared to be afraid that he might not in the new circumstances carry his friends with him into the lobby against the Bill. In a letter to Lord Randolph, quoted by Mr. Churchill, he stated reasons which made for abstention instead of a hostile vote. His Tory friend wrote imploring him to stick to his guns. Everything, he replied, would turn on the meeting of his followers.

The decision of the members acting with Mr. Chamberlain was influenced—and the fate of the Bill determined, to a great degree—by a letter from Mr. Bright. Although Bright had been on the popular Irish side during the greater part of his life, his sympathy was to some extent chilled by the obstruction and crime associated with the Parnellite movement and by the attacks made upon himself for supporting coercion. He thought that the Home Rule Bill would cause constant friction between the two countries and that it would be better for the Parliament at Westminster to go on trying by good laws to remove Irish grievances. His personal regard for Mr. Gladstone withheld him from taking a conspicuous part in opposition to the Bill, and for a short time his views were not precisely known, but in response to a request, he wrote a letter which was produced at a meeting attended

by fifty-four members, with Mr. Chamberlain in the chair, on May 31. To this meeting were summoned all 'who being in favour of some sort of autonomy in Ireland disapprove of the Government Bills in their present shape,' and it was held in Committee Room, No. 15, celebrated in a later Irish controversy.

For Mr. Bright's letter a newspaper manager offered £100 to Mr. W. S. Caine, the Radical Unionist Whip, but it was not communicated to the press. The statement was made, and frequently repeated in after years, that Mr. Caine merely indicated the contents of the document to the meeting and that he then tore it up. This assertion, however, was declared by Mr. Austen Chamberlain in 1913 to be unfounded, and a few weeks after his denial the letter, which had been preserved among his father's papers, was published in Mr. G. M. Trevelyan's biography of Mr. Bright. In this famous document Mr. Bright wrote that his own intention was to vote against the second reading, but that he was not willing to take the responsibility of advising others. 'If they can,' he said, 'content themselves with abstaining from the division I shall be glad.' The different reports of the letter given by Liberals in after years showed how varied were the impressions derived from it. Some of Mr. Gladstone's adherents who heard of it said it was misinterpreted or misunderstood. There is no doubt, however, that the determining point in it was the intimation that Mr. Bright's own intention was to vote against the second reading. His example rather than his advice was followed. Four of the members at the meeting wished to abstain and three were prepared to support the second reading, but after a second vote a resolution to oppose it was adopted with practical unanimity.

On hearing of the effect of his letter Mr. Bright expressed surprise and regret to friends at the Reform Club, and he wrote to Mr. Chamberlain on the first of June offering, if not too late, to join with him in abstaining in order to avert a dissolution. It was, however, too late. The doubts of waverers had been removed when they learned of Mr. Bright's intention to vote against the Bill. With him in the hostile lobby, they would not be afraid to strike. Their decision, moreover, was what Mr. Chamberlain desired. He meant sooner or later to kill Gladstonian Home Rule.

On the day after the fateful meeting Mr. Chamberlain, in the course of the second reading debate made piquant allusion to his own position. 'There is not,' he said, 'a man here who does not know that every personal and political interest would lead me to cast in my lot with the Prime Minister. Why, sir, not a day passes in which I do not receive dozens or scores of letters urging me, for my own sake, to vote for the Bill and dish the Whigs! Well, sir, the temptation is no doubt a great one, but after all I am not base enough to serve my

personal ambition by betraying my country.' His critics retorted that he was at this point desirous not of dishing the Whigs but of dishing Mr. Gladstone. According to his own statement, however, he was reluctantly forced into a hostile attitude by the sincere conviction that Mr. Gladstone's proposals would weaken the supremacy of the imperial Parliament. He made an important qualification. 'It is,' he explained, 'upon the method and plan of the Bill that we are going to the country, and not upon its principle. I have said it before, and I say it again : give me the principle without the Bill and I will vote for it.' This view of the issue only confirmed the suspicion of the official Liberals that what he objected to was not the scheme but its author.

A final and flattering appeal was addressed to Mr. Chamberlain in a letter written by Mr. Labouchere on behalf of a large number of Radical members who had always looked to him as 'the leader of their phase of political thought.' The issue, as they believed, was entirely in his hands, and they dreaded a General Election without him on their side. 'When Achilles returned to his tent the Greeks were defeated ; what would it have been,' asked Mr. Labouchere, 'had Achilles lent the weight of his arm to the Trojans?' Mr. Chamberlain was not turned aside by the appeal. His reply to 'My dear Labouchere' was prompt and emphatic. 'We are ready,' he wrote, 'to accept as a principle the expediency of establishing some kind of legislative authority in Ireland, subject to the conditions which Mr. Gladstone himself has laid down, but we honestly believe that none of these conditions are satisfactorily secured by the plan which has been placed before us.'

Mr. Gladstone's reply to Mr. Chamberlain at the end of the second reading debate, delivered in a tone of irony with a touch of scorn, dealt with the indefiniteness of his attitude. The Radical leader had boasted that a dissolution had no terrors for him.

'I do not wonder at it' (said Mr. Gladstone). 'I do not see how a dissolution can have any terrors for him. He has trimmed his vessel, and he has touched his rudder in such a masterly way that in whichever direction the winds of heaven may blow, they must fill his sails. Supposing that at an election public opinion should be very strong in favour of the Bill, my right honourable friend would then be perfectly prepared to meet that public opinion, and tell it "I declared strongly that I adopted the principle of the Bill." On the other hand, if public opinion were very adverse to the Bill he again is in complete armour because he says, "Yes, I voted against the Bill." Supposing again public opinion is in favour of a very large plan for Ireland, my right honourable friend is perfectly provided for that case also. The Government plan was not large enough for him, and he proposed in his speech on the introduction of the Bill that we should have a measure on the basis of federation, which goes beyond this Bill. Lastly—and now I have very nearly boxed the compass—supposing that public opinion should take quite a different turn, and instead of wanting very large measures for Ireland should demand very small measures for Ireland, still the resources of my right honourable friend are not exhausted, because he is then

able to point out that the last of his plans was for four provincial circuits controlled from London.' All these alternatives and provisions were, in Mr. Gladstone's opinion, 'creations of the vivid imagination, born of the hour and perishing with the hour, totally unavailable for the solution of a great and difficult problem.'

The fatal division on the night of June 7 placed the Government in a minority of thirty. As many as ninety-three Liberals voted against the Bill, among them being Mr. Bright, the venerated friend of Gladstone, Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Goschen and Sir Henry James, as well as Sir George Trevelyan, who had taken office and had resigned.

'Judas!' 'Traitor!' cried the Nationalists, as they glared across the House at the member for West Birmingham, while the Conservatives cheered for the second time within twelve months at the downfall of a Gladstone Administration. The feelings of the defeated were expressed elsewhere in a dramatic style by Mr. Morley, who, deploring the fatal attack on the Liberal chief by former associates and colleagues, quoted from the funeral oration of Mark Antony over the mantle of the great Cæsar:—

Look! in this place, ran Cassius' dagger through;
See, what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this, the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd.

It was explained by the commentators that Cassius stood for Lord Hartington and Brutus for Mr. Bright, and every one guessed who was the envious Casca of the Home Rule tragedy. The tragedy embittered and darkened political life for many years, one section of Liberals blaming Mr. Gladstone for precipitancy, and the other denouncing Mr. Chamberlain for desertion. Once more Dr. Dale entered a protest on behalf of his friend.¹ 'How is it,' he asked, 'that Mr. Chamberlain is the object of so much bitterness? Lord Hartington and Mr. Bright are just as responsible as he is for throwing out the Bill. . . . He may be mistaken as other men have been; but he stands by the faith which he has professed, and has made the heaviest personal sacrifices in doing so. Had he remained in the Ministry after Lord Hartington refused to join it, he would have been heir-apparent to the leadership of the Commons.' In another letter Dr. Dale, referring to this sacrifice and to the prospect of unpopularity for Mr. Chamberlain, remarked: 'It is rather dangerous political morality to suggest that a man is playing for his own hand when in harmony with his avowed convictions he feels obliged to separate himself from his party at such a cost as this.'

The adherents of the Prime Minister doubted whether his former lieutenant had really followed his avowed convictions. Their anger was due partly to the consideration that whereas the natural ten-

¹ *Life of R. W. Dale, of Birmingham.*

dency of the Whigs might have been to leave the Gladstone Government, there ought to have been no such bias on the part of the Birmingham Radicals. They believed that Mr. Chamberlain might have consistently voted for the second reading of the Bill, and the reservations he continued to make on the principle strengthened their suspicion of his motives. Addressing his constituents on June 26, he said: 'At the last General Election you know that the very idea of Home Rule was scouted by the vast majority of the Liberal party. *Not by me!* (cheers). *No, not by me! because I have always been a Home Ruler.*'

A General Election being decided upon Mr. Chamberlain acted with his usual promptitude and energy. At first he held aloof from the Liberal Unionist Association, which had been formed by Lord Hartington's followers. He favoured for a time an independent course on the part of his own supporters, and at a consultation with them at his residence it was decided to start the National Radical Union. Under his presidency this organization was inaugurated at Birmingham in June, the Radicals who promoted it being in favour of a uniform scheme of local self-government for all parts of the United Kingdom under the supreme authority of the imperial Parliament. While taking this action Mr. Chamberlain assured himself of the support of his constituency and his town. At a great meeting of the electors his action was endorsed except by a very small minority. 'Tremendous enthusiasm,' he reported, 'and the G.O.M. not in it. They would have hooted him if I had asked them.'¹

The rapid swing of politics caused excitement throughout the country, and the struggle was characterised by unusual passion. Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at numerous meetings, attacked his friends with an even keener ardour than he had displayed against the Tories. The missionary of political humanity became the missionary of a legislative union. His tone with reference to Mr. Gladstone underwent a sharp change. He accused his chief of juggling with words, just as a few months previously he had accused Lord Salisbury. His rhetoric was never more spirited or incisive. Denouncing both the Land Purchase and the Home Rule Bills at Birmingham on July 2, he said:—

You are asked to pay £150,000,000 to set up a rival Parliament in Dublin: aye, a rival and a competitor to the great Parliament at Westminster, the mother of Parliaments, the type and model of free institutions throughout the globe, and the one only security and guarantee for the rights and the liberties and the property of all Her Majesty's subjects. . . . You are asked to stake upon the hazard of a die the authority and the influence, perhaps even the existence of the empire. All I can say is that for my part I will never be a party to such a dangerous and a ruinous speculation. . . . These bills are not a concession to justice; they are not a concession to the intelligent demands of the Irish people;

¹ W. S. Caine, M.P.

all the intelligence of Ireland is opposed to them. They are a surrender to Mr. Parnell and to the forces behind him. . . . This is an unexampled crisis in our national history ; it is an unparalleled chapter in our annals. You have a Prime Minister in the very height of his popularity turning round upon himself, upon all that he has said, upon all that he has been understood to say, for I know not how many years, and making an abject surrender to the vile conspiracy which has endeavoured, I fear not altogether without success, to shake the constancy of English statesmen by threats of outrage and assassination. Will you share in this humiliation ? Will you be a party to this surrender ?

These sentences, which may enable the reader to understand the fury which Mr. Chamberlain excited in Home Rule quarters, will show also the nature of the new arguments and appeals which he addressed to the electors. The key, although pitched very high, was not above the occasion ; and he maintained it for several weeks. There is a passage in his speech at Cardiff on July 6, which recalls the fervent passion of his protests against the tyranny of the peers. Other tyrants now aroused his anger :—

Gentlemen, (he said), your ancestors have met great difficulties and dangers, and have confronted them successfully. They have arrested the tyranny of kings ; they have borne without flinching the terrors of a persecuting Church ; they have again and again rolled back the tide of foreign invasion from our shores ; they have overcome the most powerful combination of their foes ; and now will you, their descendants—you, upon whose shoulders the burden of their empire has fallen—will you be so poor-spirited as to break up your ancient constitution, to destroy your venerable Parliament, and to surrender your well-earned supremacy to the vile and ignoble force of anarchy and disorder ?

Praise came to the orator from quarters in which for years he had received unsparing censure. *The Times*, in whose opposition he had formerly gloried, took him into favour. Reviewing the stormy Parliamentary strifes of the year, it commented on his growing powers of reasoning and expression. 'The danger with which the separatist heresy threatened the splendid fabric of the British Empire, stirred up emotions in Mr. Chamberlain which gave to his speeches a force, a largeness and a patriotic ring previously wanting in them. Not only did Mr. Chamberlain thus produce unwonted effect by appealing to a higher order of conceptions, but in doing so his own ideas expanded and acquired a healthier vitality by contact with living facts.' Similar encouragement was given by Lord Randolph Churchill, who wrote that he had reasserted his position as leader of the Radical party, and on questions of Imperial policy had gained the confidence of the country.

Undoubtedly he threw off the parochial-mindedness of which he boasted in 1880, and soared to imperial heights. One of his earlier efforts in this direction was seen in his speech explaining his resignation. 'Since I have been in public affairs I have called myself, I think not altogether without reason, a Radical. But that title has never prevented me from giving great consideration to imperial

interests. I have cared for the honour, and the influence, and the integrity of the empire, and it is because I believe these things are now in danger that I have felt myself called upon to make the greatest sacrifice that any public man can make.' Again on the night before his election, in language which aroused immense enthusiasm, Mr. Chamberlain appealed to the sceptre of dominion. 'It was the stability of a great empire which they were guarding from attack. Ireland was much but the empire was more. . . . All the world would wait to see if England kept intact that which her forefathers had handed down, or if she sold her birthright, not for a mess of pottage but from sheer weakness.'

XVIII

THE ROUND TABLE

AS the result of the disruption of the Liberal Party the Conservatives occupied office for sixteen out of the next nineteen years. Mr. Gladstone's defect at the General Election in July, 1886, was decisive. The Unionists were returned to the new Parliament with a majority of 110 and even without their allies the Conservatives had a majority of thirty-six over the combined Home Rulers, British and Irish. They could only be defeated if the Liberal Unionists were to vote with the other sections of the House against them and such a combination was soon proved improbable. It was said that the millions proposed to be given to the Irish landlords under the Land Purchase Bill did the mischief. Anyhow, the cause of Home Rule was overthrown. Mr. Chamberlain carried Birmingham with him, and instead of returning seven members to vote with Mr. Gladstone it elected six Liberal Unionists and one Conservative ally of the former Conservative 'bogey.'

When Mr. Gladstone resigned, Lord Salisbury, on being sent for by Queen Victoria, held a consultation with Lord Hartington. The Conservative leader offered to serve under the Whig statesman but the time for an official coalition had not yet arrived. Even if the Whig were willing he might have been deterred by the fear that precipitate action would throw Mr. Chamberlain and his Radical followers back to Mr. Gladstone. Certainly Mr. Chamberlain ridiculed the idea of his joining a Coalition, nor was Lord Salisbury yet ready to sit with him in the same Cabinet. This, as Lord Salisbury told his Whig friend, 'would be too sharp a curve for both.'¹ Lord Hartington informed a meeting at Devonshire House—at which Mr. Chamberlain accepted his leadership—that he had declined to form a Government because it would have made the breach in the Liberal party irreparable. He and his friends were not to cease to be Liberals and they did not intend to provide any pretext for denying them that title. At the same time he promised independent support to the Conservative Administration. The Liberal Unionists crossed with the 'Gladstonians' to the opposition side of the House but assisted Lord Salis-

¹ See letter from Lord Hartington to Mr. Goschen, of July 24, 1886, in *Life of Lord Goschen*, by Mr. Arthur Elliot.

bury's colleagues in debate and voted with them in the division lobby.

Courtesies passed between the estranged Liberal leaders when they met in the new Parliament. Lord Hartington greeted Mr. Gladstone in a friendly, respectful manner, and the beaten old man held out his hand to Mr. Chamberlain who took it while he raised his hat. Recriminations were, however, revived in debate on the Address. While Lord Hartington's followers were, to their annoyance, described as dissentients, Mr. Gladstone's adherents were insulted as 'separatists.' Mr. Chamberlain, speaking on August 6, provoked many jeers by declaring that he was not going to do anything to turn out the Conservative Government as long as the party which would take its place was committed to a separatist policy. His speech was full of gibes at old friends, and was much cheered by new allies. Reference had been made to his 'honour,' but Mr. Sexton, a very able and eloquent Irish member, in a pitiless passage, said, as Lady Teazle said to Joseph Surface: 'Don't you think we may as well leave honour out of the argument?' Sir Wilfrid Lawson sneered at him as the autocrat of the new Government and when he complained that he had been ostracised by the Liberal party, Sir William Harcourt retorted that it was rather the other way, and that he had ostracised every one but his single self. Mr. Gladstone after the fall of his Ministry 'was persuaded, mainly through the influence of Lord Granville, to have an interview with Mr. Chamberlain; but it led to no satisfactory result.'¹ The rebelling Radical was impenitent. 'He had anticipated,' wrote Mr. Labouchere nineteen years later, 'that the Liberal party would side with him. Finding that Mr. Gladstone was stronger than himself in the party he went over to the Conservatives.'

There was, however, one brief period of wavering in his career; one point in his journey with the Conservatives when he halted and hesitated. The halt was occasioned by a politician whose history continued to be as strange and exciting as his own. Lord Randolph Churchill on being appointed in 1885 as Secretary of State for India had turned his back, like Henry V, on his former self, and revealed high qualities as a responsible statesman; and on the formation of Lord Salisbury's second Government in 1886 he became Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. Occupying those high posts at the age of thirty-seven the Tory democrat seemed to be entering on a brilliant official career. Two days before Christmas, however, he startled the country by the announcement that he had resigned. The immediate cause of this step was his inability to support the military estimates of his colleagues. That was a sufficient reason, although others were suspected, as Lord Randolph's mind

¹ *Life of Lord Granville*, by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice.

was cast in a different mould from the Marquis of Salisbury's and his ambition was restless.

In Mr. Chamberlain's view the political situation was transformed by his democratic friend's resignation. On the day it was announced, he told his constituents that he feared the old Tory influences had gained the upper hand, and that they might be face to face with a Government whose proposals no consistent Liberal would be able to support. He caused almost as much commotion as Lord Randolph's resignation had excited, by pleading for reunion. 'We Liberals,' he said, 'are agreed upon ninety-nine points of our programme. . . . I say even upon Irish matters when I look into the thing, I am more surprised at the number of points upon which we agree than at the remainder upon which for the present we may be content to differ.' Sitting round a table and coming together in a spirit of compromise and conciliation, almost any three men, leaders of the Liberal party, although they might hold opposite views upon another branch of the question, would yet, as he declared, be able to arrange some scheme. He had spent a couple of months in eastern Europe, and as these amicable words fell from his lips soon after his return, trusting Liberals surmised that he had seen the error of his ways and wished to return to the old flag. Those who build vast speculations on trifling circumstances detected significance in the visit that Mr. Morley and Mr. Chamberlain paid together to the Lyceum Theatre on the last night of 1886. Their comradeship, it was conjectured, would not have been publicly renewed unless there were sanguine hope of a political reconciliation.

Light has been thrown on Mr. Chamberlain's motives and calculations by the publication of a letter which he wrote to Lord Randolph on hearing of his resignation. 'The Government,' he said, 'is doomed, and I suspect we may have to re-form parties on a new basis. You and I are equally adrift from the old organizations.' And again: 'The party tie is the strongest sentiment in this country—stronger than patriotism or even self-interest. But it will come all right in the end for both of us.' These expressions indicate that while suggesting the round-table conference, Mr. Chamberlain's aim or expectation was not reunion with his former colleagues. He was contemplating the formation of a new party.

His conciliatory overtures were not received cordially by all Liberals. Some of them were indifferent as to his return. They thought that if he wanted to come back he might find his way without assistance from their leaders. His own view was of quite another sort. He believed he was master of the situation. 'My speech,' he wrote to Lord Randolph Churchill on December 26, 'has fluttered the dovescotes tremendously, and my correspondence shows that many

of the Gladstonians are very uncomfortable and anxious to come to terms.' 'But I do not believe,' he added, 'that there will be any practical result.'¹

Mr. Gladstone was not much, if at all, more sanguine. Large and final arrangements from a conference it would be rash, he thought, to expect, but he had himself, as he told Lord Acton, laboured in a conciliatory sense, and he did not allow the possibility of a reunion to pass. He considered the Birmingham speech to be an important fact of which due note ought to be taken. If he had ignored it he would have played into the hands of a man who might have desired to show that his overtures were repulsed. Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley believed in the *bona fides* of Mr. Chamberlain, but another old colleague was inclined to suspect that he was only trying to put himself right with the large body of Liberals, without any prospect of coming to an arrangement. With these varied feelings in the minds of the leaders the conference 'round a table' was arranged, Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Morley, and Lord Herschell representing the official section of the party, and Mr. Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan representing some at least of those who had voted against the Home Rule Bill.

When Mr. Chamberlain was thus fluttering his former friends with prospects of reunion Lord Hartington was in Italy and thither, when Lord Randolph Churchill resigned, an urgent message was sent by Lord Salisbury. According to an amused observer, 'a Whig nobleman who was studying antiquities in Rome' was 'hurried home to save the political antiquities at the Carlton Club.' The idea of a coalition was renewed, and again the Conservative leader offered to serve under his Whig ally. Lord Hartington still preferred to maintain an independent position, but with his entire concurrence Mr. Goschen joined the Government as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord Randolph Churchill found his place filled much more easily than he had considered possible. If he had acted in the belief that he was necessary at the Treasury he 'forgot Goschen.' The Administration became, in fact, more homogeneous under the fresh arrangement, for the Whig financier had more in common with the Prime Minister than his Tory predecessor. Mr. W. H. Smith was appointed leader of the House of Commons, and when he died, regretted by all parties, Lord Randolph Churchill's opportunity had passed. Another statesman had by that time reached the front rank, and while the once brilliant 'Randy' sank in ill-health to an early grave, Mr. Arthur Balfour secured the position which led to the office of Prime Minister.

In reopening negotiations with the Gladstonian Liberals the

¹ *Lord Randolph Churchill*, by W. S. Churchill.

member for West Birmingham was regarded by his resigned ally as pursuing an erroneous course. Lord Randolph Churchill, speaking in Parliament, delighted the Home Rulers by a gibe at his 'extraordinary gyrations.' This comment drew from Mr. Chamberlain a letter of expostulation. 'Surely,' he concluded, 'we shall have our hands fully occupied without tearing out each other's eyes.' Lord Randolph, as usual, responded amicably, so far as the personal question was concerned. 'I do not think,' he wrote, 'I said anything which ought even to ruffle our private friendship, which—though it may seem a paradox to say so—is one of the chief and few remaining attractions of political life.'¹

The history of the Round Table Conference, which forms one of the most puzzling passages in a puzzling career, has been told in countless speeches and newspapers, but the historians have not agreed. Those who took part in it at Sir William Harcourt's house in Grafton Street, carried away conflicting impressions. There were preliminary meetings of the distinguished statesmen in the middle of January, 1887, which led Mr. Chamberlain to speak hopefully of a settlement, and their deliberations were resumed a month later. Some disparaging remarks on Gladstonians made in a speech at Birmingham by its celebrated citizen, caused irritation at the Round Table, but this was removed at 'a good dinner' at Sir George Trevelyan's and the conference proceeded. Contradictory accounts were given in subsequent times of the measure of agreement secured on the question of Home Rule. On the one hand Mr. Chamberlain complained that he failed to obtain any pledge that Mr. Gladstone and his friends would accept any of the conditions which had been laid down as essential by Lord Hartington and himself. On the other hand Sir William Harcourt declared that upon most fundamental points the statesmen at the conference were in entire accord. At the end of February, whatever may have been the course of the deliberations, the representatives of the Liberal party laid the results so far achieved before their leader, who agreed to set forth in a memorandum his view on the whole question.

A letter from Mr. Chamberlain published in the *Baptist* and reprinted in the daily press put an end to the high hopes of an arrangement. The writer contended that Home Rule was leading to the indefinite postponement of just and pressing reforms such as Welsh disestablishment and made offensive reference not only to the new policy but to its advocates who proposed 'handing over the minority in Ireland to the tender mercies of Mr. Parnell and the Irish League.' 'Thirty-two millions of people,' he wrote, 'must go without much-needed legislation because three millions are disloyal, while nearly

¹ *Lord Randolph Churchill*, by W. S. Churchill.

six hundred members of the imperial Parliament will be reduced to forced inactivity because some eighty delegates, representing the policy and receiving the pay of the Chicago Convention, are determined to obstruct all business until their demands have been conceded.' By this letter, according to one of those engaged in the conference, 'all the old bitterness, the old irritation, and the old offences were renewed, revived and repeated.' A friend to whom the writer showed it beforehand warned him of what would be its consequences, but those could have been surmised by no one more shrewdly than by himself.

The conference, suspended in order that Mr. Gladstone might sum up the result of the communications of his colleagues, was never resumed. He held that the *Baptist* letter interposed an unexpected obstacle in his way, and it was subsequently treated by his friends as the cause of the rupture, although Mr. Chamberlain pointed out that after it appeared Sir William Harcourt publicly declared that the differences at the Round Table were few and secondary. He on his own part insisted that the negotiations broke down because there was a power behind the Liberal leaders which they did not dare to face, and which prevented them from granting adequate concessions.¹ 'We appear to be as far from a settlement as ever,' reported Mr. Chamberlain to his friends in Birmingham, on March 12; and he added that personally he had done what he could. Even in the speech on this occasion in which he defined the position of 'every leading member of the Unionist Liberal party,' he said they had no difference with Mr. Gladstone except upon one single point, and on this point they objected not to the principle but to the methods. If certain objections could be met they were ready to 'accept any scheme for conferring on Ireland legislative authority to deal with its exclusively domestic concerns.' This passage has embarrassed some of the apologists who try to prove that Home Rule as conceived by its early advocate was fundamentally different from the system proposed by Mr. Gladstone.

At the time of the conference, or a little later, Mr. Chamberlain wrote to Mr. Morley to tell him that so earnestly did he desire the union of the Liberals and the settlement of the Irish question that if it was considered that any objection to himself stood in the way of an agreement or an amicable arrangement, he was personally prepared, if that agreement was arrived at, to retire altogether from public life. The offer was not accepted. Mr. Morley would be the

¹ Mr. Chamberlain said to Mr. Barry O'Brien, 'I revived my National Councils scheme at the Round Table Conference. I believe they were willing to accept it. They asked Parnell. Parnell would not have it, and that of course made an end in the matter.'—*Life of C. S. Parnell*.

last man to impose so great a sacrifice on any friend, and it is evident, now at any rate, that the sort of agreement which was to be the preliminary to resignation was impossible. The story of the offer was told by Mr. Chamberlain himself in 1892, in order to rebut the charge of personal ambition which was then brought against him.

Mystery has continued to surround his motives at the period of the conference, and the views which politicians take of his conduct in suggesting it and subsequently in writing the provocative letter to the *Baptist* are influenced in many cases by preconceived notions. Unsympathetic critics suggest that his aim, as Lord Granville suspected, was merely to put himself right with the large body of Liberals. They suppose that he was still hopeful of winning the majority to his side, and that by inducing the negotiators to agree to his proposals he expected to make Mr. Gladstone's retention of the leadership impossible. His letters to Lord Randolph Churchill indicate also, as we have seen, that his aim was not reunion on the old lines. On the other hand the plea which he put forward that the Liberal leaders were prevented by Mr. Parnell from making satisfactory concessions was accepted by Unionists as an adequate explanation. Lord Hartington and others who considered the conference premature or ill-advised had not been sanguine as to its results. It enabled Mr. Chamberlain, however, to convince his friends that he had done his best to promote conciliation. Henceforward he acted with the Conservatives.

Coercion became the test of politics. When a new stiffening of the Irish criminal law was proposed by the Government in 1887 the Liberals expected that the Radical section of Unionists would be driven back on their old party. Seeing that Mr. Chamberlain had threatened to resign in 1885 rather than renew the coercion which then existed, it was supposed that whatever might have been the cause of the failure of the Round Table Conference he would now refuse to vote with the Conservatives. His Unionism, however, stood the strain. He supported the Crimes Bill in speeches which fanned the flame of national feeling. His tone was defiant. He anticipated that he would be taunted with his alliance with the Tories. 'At least our allies,' he retorted, 'will be English gentlemen, and not the subsidised agents of a foreign conspiracy. I look beyond mere Parliamentary considerations. The Government may be Tory, but if its measures are Liberal I am prepared to discuss them on their merits, and without regard to past controversies.' The fact that threescore Liberals went into the lobby to support a stringent measure of coercion 'without any of the usual evidence and warrants' was to Mr. Gladstone 'the bitterest of all disappointments in connexion with this deplorable issue.' He and his friends were

specially surprised by the devotion of the Chamberlain group to the new Government, and Mr. Morley in the sternest tone denounced them as coercionist Radicals.

Gradually Mr. Chamberlain drew further and further away from the Gladstonians. He acted in intimate consultation with Lord Hartington, and their forces throughout the country were jointly organized in 1887. The Liberal Union was formed at Devonshire House in February with the Whig as president and the Radical as a vice-president. At a dinner given in June by the Liberal Union Club, to which his friends moved from the Eighty Club after the latter had refused to entertain him, Mr. Chamberlain declared that he was no longer sanguine of the possibility of reconciliation with old friends and expressed his absolute confidence in Lord Hartington. He had privately continued to advocate provincial Parliaments on the Canadian lines, but was dissuaded by his new leader from pushing this project in public. Responsibility for the disunion of the Liberal party was cast by him on the Home Rule section. 'The Gladstonian Liberals,' he said, 'have made their choice. They prefer an alliance with the Parnellites to any chance of reconciliation with their old colleagues and old friends. The men who have surrendered everything to the Irish Party and to their American allies now slam the door in our faces, and in the faces of all who will not join them in their abject surrender.' There was only one point at which he refused to act with his new allies. He voted with the Opposition for a motion protesting against the proclamation of the National League which had risen out of the ashes of the Land League. This was counted to him as a slight sign of grace.

On Sir George Trevelyan, who could not long endure Conservative policy and who on returning to the Liberal fold was hailed as a repentant prodigal, Mr. Chamberlain poured bitter scorn. Instead of repenting he demanded repentance from opponents. He attacked Mr. Gladstone in and out of the House, declaring that without any preliminary discussion in the country, and without full or fair consultation with his followers, the veteran leader had flung an apple of discord among them, and thrust down their throats a reversal of all the traditions of the party. To 'the older and nobler creed of Liberalism' he himself appealed.

An amusing account has been given by Lady Randolph Churchill of an attempt by Mr. Chamberlain in a summer cruise to interest Lord Hartington in a scheme for a National party which he and Lord Randolph were considering.¹ One can imagine his own ardour and Lord Hartington's 'frozen attitude.' The Whig preferred his alliance with the Marquis of Salisbury to association in a new party with the

¹ *The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill.*

Tory democrat. The National party was not formed, and indeed its advocates did not always agree. Mr. Chamberlain's angry antagonism to those from whom he had so recently parted led Lord Randolph Churchill to make a biting reference to him in August, during discussion on the Irish Land Bill. 'The right honourable gentleman,' said the ex-Conservative Minister, 'evidently does not understand the process of differing from one's party and yet supporting it.' 'Neither,' retorted Mr. Chamberlain, 'am I a member who speaks one way and votes another.' This was a gibe at Lord Randolph's criticism of the Government with which he voted. The tiff led, as on other occasions, to a letter from the Radical statesman who sought persistently to keep on good terms with an old friend whose temper was as quick and whose tongue was as sharp as his own. 'I hope,' he said (in a sentence published by Mr. Churchill), 'that in this case it is *ira amantium redintegratio amoris*.'

XIX

AN INTERLUDE

AN interlude in Mr. Chamberlain's political career was provided by his appointment in the autumn of 1887 as one of Her Majesty's plenipotentiaries to represent Great Britain on a Commission with reference to North American fisheries. To his selection for this duty some objection was taken by a few Radicals and Nationalists on the ground that he would be unacceptable to the Irish on the other side of the Atlantic, but there was, except among such extreme opponents, a recognition of his special fitness for the work. The mission, as the Foreign Office testified, was eminently successful in bringing to a conclusion differences which had threatened to strain our relations with the United States. Although the treaty which the negotiators arranged was rejected by the American Senate it was accompanied by a *modus vivendi* which was renewed again and again.

On the vote for the expenses of the mission being taken in the House of Commons the Government expressed hearty acknowledgments to Mr. Chamberlain for the services he had rendered to the State. Mr. Labouchere, moved by political hostility, complained that he had cost over £30 a day in performing a duty which should have been entrusted to our regular representative at Washington, and although Mr. Gladstone magnanimously approved of what had been done and praised Mr. Chamberlain's public spirit, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, a leading Nationalist, gave expression to Irish hatred. He attributed to Mr. Chamberlain 'infirmary of temper,' and a 'power of making himself personally obnoxious,' and commented on the 'almost Belshazzar-like splendour of his feasts' in America. 'All the fashion, all the statesmanship, all the wealth, and though last, not least, all the beauty and luxury of America seem to have been invited to the bounteous and hospitable board of the right honourable gentleman.' In spite, however, of prejudice, a hostile amendment was rejected by a majority of 314 to 68.

When Mr. Chamberlain reappeared at St. Stephen's, in March, 1888, he was greatly cheered, and many members on both sides shook hands with him. Birmingham enrolled him the first 'honorary freeman' of his adopted city, and he was entertained to dinner at the Devonshire Club in London by both sections of Liberals. Queen

Victoria sent to him a photograph-portrait bearing in her own handwriting the inscription : ' To the Right Honourable J. Chamberlain, on his return from Washington, Victoria R. '

It was stated, apparently on authority, that he was offered a title. *Punch* expected he would become a baronet. ' Our Fishery-Commissionery Young Man ' was depicted gaily attired in stars and stripes, saying, ' Sport ? Why, certainly ! Enjoyed myself amazingly, you bet. If I'm asked, What's the net result ? Is it barren ? I shall reply, Sir, the result is barren-net-see ! Guess that's not bad for Joseph. ' Four weeks later the comic journal was constrained to give another picture. Joseph is now seen rejecting with scorn the proffered baronetcy at the hands of Lady Tory Diplomacy and clinging to the object of his first love, Dear Democracy. The offer of a title was no doubt in his mind when at a luncheon at Birmingham in the following January, he said with significance scarcely veiled by jocularity : ' My friend Mr. Timmins has spoken of persons, presumably intimate acquaintances of his own, who desire to be Dukes of Digbeth or Earls of Edgbaston ; but for my part I say that if I live to be the age of Methuselah I shall wish for, and I shall accept, no higher honour than that of being member for Birmingham. '

Out of the Washington visit sprang an incident which increased Mr. Chamberlain's domestic happiness. ' I was fortunate enough, ' as he softly boasted, ' to make two treaties. I had my secret document as well as the public document. ' The secret treaty was his engagement to Miss Mary Endicott, only daughter of the Secretary of War in President Cleveland's Administration. He had been introduced to her at a reception at the British Legation in Washington. No formal or public announcement of the engagement was made until Mr. Chamberlain was on the Atlantic in November (1888) on his way back to America for his bride. Then the *Birmingham Daily Post* informed its readers that Miss Endicott was a member of one of the oldest and most notable families in the United States. The name of her ancestor, Governor John Endicott, was intimately associated with the foundation of the Puritan colony which became the State of Massachusetts. ' Since the date when he set foot on New England soil his descendants had lived quietly, usefully and honourably in Salem and its neighbourhood, always eminent among the citizens of Massachusetts but never obtruding claims to distinction founded upon the services of their ancestors. None of them, we believe, had achieved prominence in public life until the time of the present head of the family. '

Mr. Endicott's home in Salem was described by the *New York Herald* as a roomy and dignified-looking old Cabot mansion in Essex Street, near a century and a quarter old. ' It is a most comfortable

abiding place and has a magnificent library. In the pleasant social life of Salem, which has a peculiar charm of its own as well as in the gayer circles of the National capital the Endicotts play a leading part, the whole family being much liked.' Lord Selborne, the ex-Lord Chancellor, described Mrs. Chamberlain in the first year of her wedded life as 'a young American lady, very good looking, with excellent simple manners, more English of the best type than American.'

The marriage, in which people on both sides of the Atlantic took a kindly interest, was solemnized on November 15, in St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church, Washington—the same church in which the father and mother of Charles Stewart Parnell were wedded. Reuter's correspondent cabled that the ceremony was extremely simple and that there were no decorations in the sacred edifice. The guests included the President and high officials of the Government; and the prominent military men in the capital were present in full uniform. The *Daily Telegraph* recorded that the bride, who wore a grey travelling costume, walked down the main aisle of the church quite self-possessed, her usual bright complexion a trifle dimmed but her appearance having all that dignified charm of manner so well known in Washington society. Mr. Chamberlain wore 'solid black,' and in the button-hole of his cutaway-coat, as the American reporter observed, was a knot of white violets, while his pearl necktie was held by a broad loop of gold. The *New York Herald* added some personal touches to the picture: 'The bridegroom met the bride with a smile and outstretched hand at the lower step of the altar. Throughout the ceremony both answered the questions in clear tones and after the last benediction, for which both heads bent low, there was a joyous burst of organ music and Mr. Chamberlain led the way out with his winsome bride, every movement depicting his intense happiness.' It was further mentioned that at the wedding breakfast at Endicott House, in response to the personal congratulations of President Cleveland, the bridegroom showed much feeling.

The flower which he wore at the wedding was discussed as if it were an emblem of much significance. A gossip remarked that no Briton had ever seen him with any other *bouttonnière* than the familiar orchid. The white violet was the favourite flower of his bride, and the *World* raised the momentous problem 'whether this discard of the orchid was a unique occurrence or whether the scentless exotic had been permanently sacrificed to the sweet-smelling violet.' Events proved that the secret treaty with the bride did not include the abandonment of the 'scentless exotic.'

Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain, after travelling in America for a short time, came to Europe to complete the honeymoon tour. On Christmas Eve they arrived at Birmingham and they 'entered their carriage

before the few persons on the platform who recognized them could recover from their surprise or make any attempt at a demonstration.' Mrs. Chamberlain's formal introduction to her husband's fellow-citizens took place at a social ceremony in the Town Hall early in January, 1889, and according to the *Daily Post* her bright and handsome dignity turned her reception into a triumph. All political parties were represented, and the bride received handsome gifts of jewellery which had been subscribed for by citizens, by women and by constituents. The women in their address told her that 'in coming amongst us, it is your happy lot to be dowered with that wealth of interest, sympathy and kindly affection which Mr. Chamberlain's fellow-townsmen offer as a marriage portion to his bride.' Mr. C. E. Mathews, speaking for the citizens, paid a graceful compliment to the 'charming and winsome' bride and concluded his congratulations in the words with which Lorenzo greets Portia on her return to Belmont :—

Dear lady, Welcome home.

A reply, touched by that tenderness which always softened him when he alluded to his wife, was given by Mr. Chamberlain. 'She will tell you,' he said, 'that we have often talked of Birmingham and that I have dwelt upon the peculiar closeness of the ties which bind me to this great constituency, and now she bids me say to you that she shares all the interest that I have ever felt in its institutions and in its people, and in the public and private life of the city in which she has elected to dwell. . . . Although I never hope nor desire to lessen her love for the country she has left I know that she is prepared to take up her life in the country to which she has come in all its fullness and that she will say with Ruth of old—

Thy people shall be my people.'

XX

TRANSFORMATION

FOR six years Mr. Gladstone and his lieutenants, seated on the front Opposition bench, endured the company of the principal Liberal Unionists, who from that privileged position assailed the conduct and replied to the arguments of their former colleagues. The presence of the allies of the Conservative Government on the same bench as the leaders of the Opposition was described by one of the most tolerant of the latter as an unseemly comedy. It was by no means intended as a comedy. Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Henry James, who sat together near the gangway, insisted on their right as Privy Councillors to places at the table, and they claimed moreover to belong to the Liberal party. On the other hand the Gladstonians—as the followers of the Grand Old Man were usually called—complained that their leaders might be embarrassed in their consultations by the proximity of Unionists, and probably in their complaint they were influenced by the desire to drive the allies of the Conservatives over to the Government side and prejudice them in the opinion of wavering Liberals throughout the country. Lord Hartington said in effect: 'We will remain here because we are Liberals.' 'What you desire,' retorted the Gladstonians, 'is not to maintain your Liberal character, but to weaken the Opposition by giving the appearance of disunion on our side.' Although the old chief himself scarcely ever betrayed resentment disagreeable scenes took place in the heat and glare of debate when the so-called 'dissentient' leaders rose from the bench which he occupied and, standing quite near him, denounced his Irish policy or defended the Conservatives from his attacks.

The relations of Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain were more confidential during the stormy sessions which followed the disruption of the Liberal party than when they were Cabinet colleagues. Their careers had experienced strange vicissitudes since the one made the acquaintance of the other as Mayor of Birmingham. While Mr. Chamberlain was a new and independent member he censured the Whig leader of the Liberal Opposition; they were rivals in Mr. Gladstone's second Government; they subsequently quarrelled on public platforms over Liberal programmes; and now in a common estrangement from their common chief they drew closely together, the Whig

statesman being faithfully followed by the ambitious Radical who had been suspected of a desire to snatch the leadership from Mr. Gladstone.

In resistance to Home Rule Lord Hartington developed his highest powers, put forth his greatest strength, and obtained his chief Parliamentary success. Although his ability had seldom been questioned his impassive manner often did him injustice, but now he fought with vehemence. His speeches surprised even his friends. Standing at the end of the table, and turning to face Mr. Gladstone, or to indicate him by a gesture, Lord Hartington denounced his Irish policy in strong language and in an animated tone. His nature had been thoroughly aroused. An unsuspected passion in it was revealed. No Liberal doubted *his* sincerity or *his* patriotism. Nobody suggested that in so resolutely resisting Home Rule *he* was actuated by personal motives. It was on the Radical Unionist alone that personal imputations were cast. The special grievance in Mr. Chamberlain's case was that, as the Liberals contended, he had prepared their minds for devolution. However much he might point out that the Home Rule he contemplated was not the Home Rule that Mr. Gladstone proposed, he was treated as a deserter. Lord Hartington on the other hand was regarded as a natural opponent.

Mr. Balfour became Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1887, and in the stern administration of the Crimes Act, by which he won his way to leadership, he was steadily supported by the Liberal Unionists. Except Mr. Goschen, he had no colleague on his own side who gave him such able assistance in debate as he received from friendly statesmen sitting in the seats of the Opposition. Without their aid he would have had an unequal conflict with Mr. Gladstone, who waved the green flag and flung himself against coercion with an impetuosity and a courage unsurpassed by the youngest Nationalist.

The year 1888 was notable for its passionate Irish controversies. In the debates on the charges brought by *The Times* against Parnellites and on the Special Commission appointed to inquire into the indictment, the passages between Mr. Parnell and Mr. Chamberlain were specially acrimonious. Enraged by a patronizing reference to their early co-operation the 'uncrowned King of Ireland' accused his former friend of having betrayed Cabinet secrets when in office, and of having put forward others to do what he was afraid to do himself. There was no necessity for Mr. Chamberlain to defend his personal courage. No one really suspected him of the lack of that quality. He took the opportunity, however, to deny that he had had any direct communication with Mr. Parnell while a member of the Cabinet except, as he was reminded, when the Irish leader came to his house after the Phoenix Park murders. There were indirect communications,

but he stated that the substance of everything which passed with reference to the release of the prisoners from Kilmainham was made known to Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Forster, and that the Cabinet was informed also of the whole of the proposals with reference to the scheme of National Councils. This declaration was corroborated by Mr. Gladstone. 'My memory,' he said, 'is in accordance with what has been stated by my right honourable friend.'

The cry of 'Judas!' raised in an earlier session was repeated on March 30, after Mr. Chamberlain had defended his honour against Mr. Parnell's allegations. On the stroke of midnight, when debate stood adjourned, Mr. T. P. O'Connor made a remark which was followed by the laughter of his friends. The Radical Unionist, turning from the front Opposition bench and facing the Nationalists, asked: 'What did he say?' 'He called you Judas Chamberlain,' promptly answered Mr. Biggar with an aggravating smile. The insult was so marked that it could not be ignored, and in deference to the Speaker, Mr. O'Connor, after a little altercation, withdrew the offensive epithet. It was used on a future occasion, which will be described at the proper place, when it contributed to the most disgraceful scene witnessed in Parliament for generations. Mr. Chamberlain was not unduly sensitive. He knew that the expression sprang from the embittered feelings of baffled men, and he measured their defeat by their anger. In a later year when a Liberal member took an independent and unpopular course he sarcastically expressed surprise that the regular party men did not call him also 'Judas.'

Home Rulers were naturally elated in 1889 by the breakdown of the worst charge of *The Times* against Mr. Parnell—that of writing a letter apologising for his condemnation of the Phoenix Park murders and saying: 'Though I regret the accident of Lord F. Cavendish's death I cannot refuse to admit that Burke got no more than his deserts.' When Richard Pigott, after giving evidence before the Special Commission, confessed that he had forged the letter, fled from England and shot himself dead in Madrid, there was a reaction in the Irish leader's favour and a consequent change in the political situation. Coercion and forgery were unpopular props for any cause. Mr. Chamberlain, however, kept the main Irish issue in view, and on the Government motion, in March, 1890, to adopt the report of the Commission he renewed his attack upon Nationalist methods. While Conservative Lord Randolph Churchill censured the Ministers for their partisan procedure they were defended by Radical Mr. Chamberlain. 'Conspiracy,' Mr. Chamberlain said, 'was cloaked and concealed by what the Nationalists called the constitutional agitation. What guarantee have we that the same thing is not going on now? What proof have we that if Home Rule is granted we shall not find behind it a Fenian

organization using Home Rule as a first step to independence ? ' His point of view had altered since 1886, and Home Rule, instead of being admitted as a principle, was now dreaded as a bogey. He attributed the change to the revelations of the Commission.

The evil that a forger could not do to the Irish cause was done by its champion himself. The tide of sympathy which set in after Pigott's confession instantly receded when a court of law found that Mr. Parnell had committed adultery with the wife of the Irish friend who had arranged his liberation from Kilmainham. Public opinion was shocked by his sin, and political considerations were forced to yield to the higher claims of morality. The O'Shea divorce case led to the most exciting and dramatic controversy which has ever been conducted in a committee room at the House of Commons. When the Nationalist members, at the meeting of Parliament, in November, 1890, with reckless generosity re-elected Mr. Parnell as chairman for the session, their decision produced consternation and dismay among the Liberals, and Mr. Gladstone promptly arranged for the publication of a letter stating that the continuance of the member for Cork at the head of the Irish party would render his own leadership almost a nullity. 'The voter now tells me,' he recorded in a memorandum, 'that he cannot give a vote for making the Mr. Parnell of to-day the ruler of Irish affairs under British sanction.'¹ His letter induced the Nationalists to reconsider their decision. Committee room No. 15, a handsome chamber overlooking the Thames, became of special interest to Irish visitors as the scene of the debates in which Mr. Parnell's fate was settled. Defiant and confident, he refused to resign, but at last after controversy had continued for several days the majority of his colleagues formally deposed him, and in his place elected Mr. Justin McCarthy, the mild-mannered novelist. Thereupon the dethroned 'King,' to whom a considerable minority adhered, cut himself off from the Liberal alliance, flouted Mr. Gladstone as 'that garrulous old gentleman,' and asserted that the Home Rule Bill, which he welcomed in 1886, was not regarded by the Nationalists as a final settlement, but was accepted only as an instalment for what it was worth. His revelation served the cause of the Unionists and set back the stone which Mr. Gladstone, with gigantic efforts, had been rolling up the hill. 'Home Rule,' Mr. Chamberlain boasted on the last day of 1890, 'is as dead as Queen Anne, and we have at last unmasked and revealed in its true colours the greatest fraud and imposture that was ever sought to be palmed off upon the British nation.'

So complete a change of colleagues and conduct as took place in the case of Mr. Chamberlain after the Liberal disruption had not been seen since the alliance of Fox with Lord North. His leader and

¹ *Life of Gladstone*, by John Morley.

most intimate associate in high political regions was 'Rip Van Winkle'; he was a confidential ally of 'the armchair politician,' 'the superior person,' 'the skeleton at the feast'; he supported the coercion policy of a rising statesman who had denounced his Radical schemes as mischievous and who had declared that his attacks on the House of Lords consisted of bad history, bad logic and bad taste; he kept in power a Prime Minister with an 'over-bearing attitude' and 'an air of patrician arrogance,' belonging to the class 'who toil not neither do they spin'; he exchanged the comradeship of Sir William Harcourt, Mr. John Morley and Sir Charles Dilke for the flattering company of 'hungry office-seekers' and 'care-takers'—the men who in 1885 'had done more to lessen the authority of the law in Ireland than all the Radicals had said and done during the previous five years,' the men who had likened him to Jack Cade and the Artful Dodger, who had accused him of profligate promises and who had stormed him with 'torrents of abuse and whirlwinds of invective.'

The author of ransom became the favourite of the wealthy. Old Radical friends described him basking in the smiles of duchesses, but the description had a grain of malice; Mr. Chamberlain never troubled himself about the smiles of any set; he took his own course. Undoubtedly, however, the opinion in which he was held by different classes veered completely. While an Irish member commented upon his 'well-earned reputation for turning somersaults in politics,' the Whig Duke of Argyll, who lectured him a few years previously, informed the House of Lords that Mr. Chamberlain had 'grown in political stature and wisdom.' He was denounced on the one hand by Liberals as an apostate and a renegade, a traitor and a deserter; and on the other hand he himself said of the Tories and Whigs: 'I have found out that they are very good fellows, and they have found out that my measures are very safe measures.'

An attitude of independent support or 'friendly opposition' to a Government is generally, as Bagehot has pointed out, the most trying to political reputation and it was as alien to the character of Mr. Chamberlain's mind as to Brougham's. He also was a 'rushing man' with an 'aggressive intelligence.' Yet so deadly was his dislike of the party which he had quitted and so determined was he to be revenged on his former colleagues that he gave to the Conservative Administration as valuable assistance as any set of statesmen ever received from an ally.

Time gradually confirmed the new coalition. The Liberal Unionists entered into a compact with the Conservatives as to the seats which each section should contest against the common enemy, and Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain developed their new organizations. A Liberal Unionist Association having been established in Birmingham

in 1888, Mr. Chamberlain at the first combined meeting of the divisional councils on May 28, made a characteristic allusion to the political transformation. 'I regret that this new departure should have been forced upon us, but it became probable three years ago when the great leader of the Liberal party at a few weeks' notice turned his back upon all the old professions and principles that he had advocated during the greater part of his life, and surrendered to a faction whose policy he had denounced in eloquent language.' This was the gist of his contention during the early years of the transformation. 'It is you,' he told the Gladstonians, 'who have changed and not I.'

Those who take pleasure in speculation may inquire what would have happened if there had been no disruption of the Liberal party. For many years after that unfortunate occurrence Radicals felt the want of a leader like Mr. Chamberlain, who could devise ingenious Parliamentary tactics and conduct great electioneering campaigns. If he had remained in the party he would admittedly have become chief. What would have been the history of the country under a Radical Government of which he was the head? Would the land laws have been altered? Would the power of the House of Lords have been limited? Would the Church have been disestablished? Would war in the Transvaal have been avoided? Would the fiscal policy of the country have been left unchallenged? Would Home Rule of some sort have been granted to Ireland? Would the House of Commons have been dazzled by duels between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain as brilliant as those fought by Gladstone and Disraeli?

However these questions may be answered, it is undoubted that the resignation of Mr. Chamberlain in the spring of 1886 produced effects further-reaching than were dreamt of at the time. Liberals who parted from him with reluctance and regret hardened their hearts as time went on, and many of them when irritated told him that they would not take him back even if he desired to return. The feelings of the men who had 'followed him, honoured him' were well expressed by Mr. Morley at Ipswich, in September, 1888, in Browning's familiar lines—

He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!
We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire.

Those critics, however, who predicted that Mr. Chamberlain, adrift from Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal party and associated with his erstwhile opponents, would sink to a negligible quantity in politics, were disappointed by the course of events. He became a still greater

personality : he excited more attention and was even more discussed than before. In his new surroundings he was as restless, as energetic, as persuasive as in the earlier sphere. Sir William Harcourt declared that he had set himself an impossible task in trying to hunt with the dukes and to run with the people, but Mr. Chamberlain, always sanguine, confident and resourceful, boasted of a change in policy ' which has made it possible that I, who have been a Radical all my life, and who have not changed one of the opinions which I have ever expressed, should support heartily and cordially a Government, every member of which, with one exception, is a Conservative.'

His new friends sometimes found it rather difficult to manage him. When Mr. Bright died in the spring of 1889 Lord Randolph Churchill desired very much to obtain the seat for Central Birmingham which he had formerly contested, and a deputation of the local Conservatives came to the House of Commons with an invitation. The Tory democrat took counsel with Sir Michael Hicks-Beach and, according to an account of the affair by his friend, Mr. Jennings, which his son has published, Lord Hartington informed them that ' Chamberlain was furious at the idea of R. C. going to Birmingham—that he was in a state of extreme irritability.' Lord Randolph was induced to waive his claims, although the Tories of the constituency were so angry at being deprived of a popular candidate that Mr. Balfour had to go and reason with them. Mr. Chamberlain was suspected of a jealous dread of a rival who might win the allegiance of some of his own people. Naturally he disapproved of two kings of Brentford smelling at the same nosegay.

Recrimination between the regular Liberals and Mr. Chamberlain was sharpened to its keenest edge in 1889 by his persistent support of Conservative ministers and measures. Mr. Morley put an extra strain on a much tried friendship by a personal gibe. Noting that the comparison with Jack Cade, formerly applied to Mr. Chamberlain, had now been instituted by Lord Salisbury in his own case, he sarcastically said : ' Who knows but that I may be made a Fishery Commissioner and may be even admitted to the society of gentlemen ! ' Mr. Chamberlain was hurt by this reflection on his American mission and the aristocratic company which he was supposed to keep. He complained that Mr. Morley in ' a very bitter and personal speech ' had taken the opportunity to insult ' an old friend who had never personally attacked him, and to whom in times past he was not unwilling to admit considerable obligations.' Sir William Harcourt, never backward in such a controversy, dropped into poetry and acclaimed—

When I think of what he is,
And what he ought to was,
I can't but think he's thrown hisself away
Without sufficient cause.

With still greater acerbity Mr. Chamberlain retorted by calling Sir William a chameleon and by asserting that his sword was always at the service of the strongest faction. It was only in his old age that some men ceased to call that most steadfast Liberal the Dugald Dalgetty of politics !

XXI

RECANTATION

HIS forward voice now is to speak well of his friend : his backward voice is to—detract.’ Thus it was in the case of Unionist Mr. Chamberlain and his old friend, the Radical. The influence of new ideas and new associates was shown in the manner of his defence of royal grants when provision was made in 1889 for the Prince of Wales’s children. Not content with expressing his own opinion that the sum proposed was reasonable and moderate, he sneered with terrible bitterness at the Radicals who had told the House that ‘the People with a capital P’ thought it exorbitant. Such members, he said, ‘represent the class jealousies, the petty spite, and the enmities which they do their utmost to stimulate ; they represent the superficial, popular prejudices to which they truckle.’ Angry voices were buzzing near Mr. Chamberlain, and glances of antipathy were shot at him, but defying these manifestations and speaking in a tone of rancour he went on : ‘Members tell us it is a shameful thing to fawn upon a monarch. So it is ; but it is a much more shameful thing to truckle to a multitude.’ The erstwhile Republican who had exalted the voice of the multitude now challenged the Radicals to confess that their object was to make the monarchy unpopular and to prepare the way for its destruction. ‘Then,’ he concluded, ‘we shall see whether the People of whom we hear so much, who enjoy the fullest measure of political liberty under a constitution which is more democratic than exists in any Republic of Europe or the world—whether the People will be willing, when they understand everything, to enter upon a contest which must be prolonged, which must be exasperating, to throw the Constitution into the melting pot, to postpone indefinitely all hope of practical and material reform in order to accept the programme of those who call themselves new Radicals—new because they have nothing in common with the old Radicals, who are destructive in their aims and objects, who have never shown the slightest constructive capacity, who are in short nothing more nor less than the Nihilists of English politics.’

Few speeches have produced a more painful impression of inconsistency or have done more to alienate friends. Mr. Labouchere sneered at Mr. Chamberlain as a new recruit to the Gentlemen of

England, and a merciless reply was given by Sir William Harcourt, who spoke with unusual severity.

The right honourable gentleman (said Sir William) talks of the cant of the new Radicalism. I will borrow a well-known saying of Lord John Russell that there was something more sickening than the cant of new Radicalism and that was the recant of old Radicalism.¹ He talked of the People with a great P. Well, he has betaken himself now to greater people than he formerly associated with. He has spoken with spite and condemnation of those who stir up animosities and jealousies among classes. Yes, but this lecture comes to us from the great preacher on the text which speaks of those 'who toil not neither do they spin.' According to him, we are Nihilists on this bench. I wonder my right honourable friend chooses a seat in such a very inflammable and dangerous quarter of the House. I confess that I am almost alarmed for his personal safety. As he stood at the box lecturing us on loyalty to our leader I could not help thinking it was a dissentient leader reproving sin.² I do not think that any advantage is to be derived from terming honourable gentlemen who hold one opinion by the name of disloyal, any more than if we were to call those who hold a different opinion parasites and sycophants.

An elaborate rebuke which Mr. Chamberlain administered to Lord Randolph Churchill for expounding a policy which was not Conservative showed in the summer of 1889 how far he had wandered from his old standpoint. The offence of the Tory Democrat was aggravated by the fact that it was committed in the Midlands. At Walsall he advocated legislation on land and housing and temperance; and in Birmingham itself he ridiculed Mr. Podsnap who was accustomed to dilate on the hopeless and hereditary wickedness of the Irish people. A few days later Mr. Chamberlain, dealing with the speeches of this 'most distinguished nobleman,' predicted that his programme would be absolutely repudiated by Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour.

I dare say (he continued) you have often seen at a bazaar or elsewhere a patchwork quilt brought out for sale, which is made up of scraps from old dresses and from left-off garments which the maker has been able to borrow for the purpose. I am told that in America they call a thing of this kind a 'crazy quilt.' I think that the fancy programme which Lord Randolph Churchill put before you the other day may well be described as a 'crazy quilt.' He borrowed from the cast-off policy of all the extreme men of all the different sections. He took his Socialism from Mr. Burns and Mr. Hyndman; he took his Local Option from Sir Wilfrid Lawson; he took his Egyptian policy from Mr. Illingworth; he took his Metropolitan reform from Mr. Stuart; and he took his Irish policy from Mr. John Morley.

The new friends of the old Radical attracted the attention of

¹ This was an adaptation of what was in Mr. Gladstone's opinion the best repartee ever given in Parliament. Sir Francis Burdett, an ex-Radical, attacking his former associates had said: 'The most offensive thing in the world is the cant of Patriotism.' Lord John Russell replied: 'I quite agree that the cant of Patriotism is a very offensive thing, but the recant of Patriotism is more offensive still.'

² 'O Geordie, Jingling Geordie,' as King James says in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, 'it was grand to hear Baby Charles laying down the guilt of dissimulation and Steenie lecturing on the turpitude of incontinence.'

Punch as early as June, 1888. In a cartoon 'Joey C.' and Mr. Bung are represented drinking together. The former, in a showy check suit, with a pipe in his hand, holds up his glass and says to Mr. Bung, 'I look towards you,' and the latter replies, 'Sir, I catches yer h'eye.' Bung recalls that he used to frown on vested interests but admits he has improved, whereupon 'Joey C.' denies that there's any change in him, although 'as touching yourself, I would do the thing handsome.' In another cartoon he is seen walking between Bung and the Bishop;¹ and this is part of their conversation—

BISHOP—I am glad, Joe, to find you have altered your mind
About Secular Schooling. Your late recantation—

BRUM—Further light, my dear Sir, dawns on all—save the blind.
But recant?—oh! pray spare me that insinuation—
A term that is *too* theological!

The idea of his friendship with 'Mr. Bung' was suggested by his support of the clauses of the Local Government Bill sanctioning compensation for extinguished licenses. In May, 1888, licence-holders of the Birmingham district interviewed the members for the locality with regard to these proposals and Mr. Chamberlain laid down the principle that when any legitimate interest, which had been brought into existence with the sanction of the Legislature, was interfered with on public grounds it was the duty of the community to compensate those whose interest was disturbed. He was, he said, strongly of opinion that compensation ought to be given to the publicans. So thorough was he in his championship of the Government that when Mr. Caine, the Liberal Unionist Whip, in 1890 opposed the provision in Mr. Goschen's Budget for the buying up of licences he showed great displeasure and a breach was caused between the old friends which was followed by Mr. Caine's abandonment of the Unionist party.

Recantation was offered by the old Radical on a variety of subjects before the Parliament elected in 1886 was dissolved in 1892. Although he said in an early stage of his friendship with the Conservatives that he had not changed any of his opinions, yet on Home Rule he frankly confessed in a letter, dated July 10, 1891, that 'all that has happened since 1885 has shaken my confidence in the particular solution of the Irish question which I was then prepared heartily to support.' This referred to the scheme of National Councils.

With regard to the doctrine of Ransom, Mr. Chamberlain pleaded at the end of 1891, in Birmingham, where he had propounded it in 1885, that the 'word was not very well chosen to express my own

¹ In the *Fortnightly* for October, 1874, Mr. Chamberlain had included the licensed victualler and the Established Church parson among the holders of special immunities and advantages who 'combine to resist the aggression which threatens any of their separate interests.'

meaning.' In the following March, on being challenged as to whether he receded from the doctrine, he wrote to say that the expression had been misrepresented and distorted by *The Times* when he was accused of advocating a policy of blackmail on the richer classes. To show that this charge was entirely untrue, he mentioned a number of points in his unauthorized programme which had been dealt with by the Conservative Government, and he added that 'he had never in any way withdrawn the opinions which he expressed in 1885, but he had in several speeches admitted that the word ransom (which was not his own, but which was really borrowed from a member of the Conservative party) was open to misrepresentation, and was not the best for the purpose of expressing his meaning.' This was regarded as a diplomatic abandonment of the doctrine.

Again, the Radical who had strongly denounced plural representation in other days, adopted in 1891 a dilatory attitude when Mr. Stansfeld moved in favour of 'one man one vote' and the reduction of the term of qualification. While declaring that he maintained his former opinions he placed himself in line with the Conservatives by saying: 'You have enough of reform for any reasonable purpose. You have a House which now is both willing and capable to deal with questions which I believe are first in the hearts of the people. . . . I say distinctly that as far as I am concerned I think the time has not yet come for a new Reform Bill, and that what we have to do is to make the best of the old one.' He was reminded that in 1885 he pressed eagerly for reforms such as now in 1891 he considered premature, and he was taunted with having become a convert to the idea, which he formerly ridiculed, that the highest aim of statesmanship was—

To promise, pause, prepare, postpone,
And end by letting things alone.

To keep Mr. Gladstone out of office, however, was now his dominating impulse.

Old friends sorrowed specially when he parted from them on the education question. This they regarded as a touchstone. It was on account of concessions to Churchmen that Mr. Chamberlain in the early seventies denounced Mr. Forster, threatened Mr. Gladstone and withheld support from Liberal candidates. In those days he was for a universal scheme of unsectarian schools under local control. He declared in 1868 that the motive of the clergy in establishing and maintaining schools had been 'not the education of the people as a thing which is good in itself but the maintenance of the doctrines of the Church of England.' In 1872 he insisted that 'the representatives of the ratepayer must have absolute control of all national funds applied to secular education; all grants for this purpose made to

denominational bodies must be withdrawn ; religious teaching should be relegated to religious bodies, each at its own time and in its own buildings.' His doctrine was summed up that year in a paper read at a Suffolk Nonconformist Conference—

Let the State keep to its proper work and fit its children to take their places as citizens of a great empire, and let it leave their religious training and all that concerns their education for the kingdom which is not of this world to the care of the Churches and the responsibility of the parents.

At the General Election in 1874 he signed an appeal issued by the National Education League exhorting the electors to obtain pledges from candidates to resist any further concessions to denominational interests, and 'generally to promote the objects contemplated by the advocates of an unsectarian system of national education, controlled by the elected representatives of the ratepayers.' On the same occasion, at Sheffield, he said as regarded the schools he was willing that Scripture should be read and religious instruction given, but not at the expense of the ratepayers. Again in January, 1877, he wrote—

The efforts of all lovers of justice, and of all friends of education, must now be directed to the establishment of the principle that representation shall go hand in hand with taxation, and that no grant of national or local funds shall be made to any school, a majority of whose managing body does not consist of representatives elected by the district for the purpose.

To the close of his connexion with the Liberal party, Mr. Chamberlain maintained his early convictions. He said at Bradford in October, 1885 : 'Whenever the time comes for the discussion of the question of sectarian schools I for one shall not hesitate to express my opinion that contributions of Government money, whether great or small, ought in all cases to be accompanied by some form of representative control. To my mind the spectacle of so-called national schools, turned into a private preserve by clerical managers, and used for exclusive purposes of politics or religion, is one which the law ought not to tolerate.'

These declarations were recalled in 1888, when his name was cheered at a meeting of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Church of England. In opening a Board school at Birmingham he pointed out how greatly the denominational system had benefited by the Act of 1870, and he urged its friends to rest satisfied with the system as it stood, warning them that they would have to submit to local control if they accepted aid from the rates. At the same time, as the number of denominational schools had enormously increased, he said he did not think the nation was prepared even for their 'painless extraction.' 'No practical statesman would,' in his opinion, 'dare to propose a

measure which would be followed by the immediate withdrawal or extinction of this system and by the consequent enormous expense which that would involve.' This statement was regarded as deeply significant by grateful Churchmen. The Archbishop of Canterbury, at a meeting of the National Society, described it as a recognition of the place that voluntary schools must have in the education of the people. 'The words,' as he said, 'were the more weighty because the speaker of them was making a recantation of former opinions.' *Punch* promptly seized the new friendship for its cartoon, and in vain did Mr. Chamberlain object to 'recantation.'

When the subject of free schools was raised in 1890 it became necessary for him to get into line with the Conservatives. His plea now was that the denominational question ought not to be re-opened. Liberals who had sat at his feet and learned the doctrines quoted in these pages contended that if additional grants were given there should be popular control. 'Why!' exclaimed Mr. Chamberlain, 'this proposal is on the face of it ridiculous. The supporters of voluntary schools would not accept it; therefore it means the extinction of the voluntary system, and that is a practically intolerable proposition.' If voluntary schools were abolished we would have to provide for a capital expenditure of £28,000,000 to £40,000,000 and an annual charge of £1,680,000, in addition to the existing rates. 'As a practical man,' he was not prepared to face such an enormous burden. His new doctrine was cheered by his old adversaries. 'It is not the doctrine,' remarked Sir William Harcourt, 'that I learned from him in the days of the Birmingham League.'

In 1891, when the fee-grant was proposed by the Conservatives Mr. Chamberlain definitely renounced an early belief. He had, he said, come to the conclusion that it was 'not desirable, practicable or politic' to ask for public control over denominational schools. He urged the Churchmen to accept some sort of popular representation, but when Sir Henry Fowler submitted an amendment requiring the introduction of local representation in denominational schools receiving the fee-grant, he opposed it on the plea that it would be impossible to force such a system upon them. Universal Board schools were 'only a counsel of perfection,' and he did not think the desire for popular control would induce people to put their hands deeply into their pockets. When another amendment was moved that no religious catechism or formulary distinctive of any particular denomination should be taught in any school obtaining the fee-grant, Mr. Chamberlain taunted its supporters with subordinating the interests of education to the interests of aggressive Nonconformity. In sorrow Mr. Mundella said he seemed to have turned his back on all his former convictions. Dr. Dale vouched from personal knowledge

that the line he followed at this stage was absolutely consistent with the course he took in 1885, but the variations in his public utterances at different periods were obvious to everybody.

On Irish land legislation his versatility was almost equally conspicuous. A Liberal statesman remarked that he had spent months in discussing his numerous land purchase plans. They had all been ingenious and remarkable, and they had all been different. Mr. Chamberlain opposed Mr. Gladstone's Land Bill of 1886, on account of the obligations and risk it imposed on the British taxpayer. He displayed ingenuity in reconciling this opposition with the support which he gave to Mr. Balfour's proposals. According to the criticism of Sir William Harcourt he skated on thin ice, and formed the figure eight with agility and skill. He objected to some of the provisions of the Conservative bill of 1890, which was dropped, and his objections were removed by the bill passed in the following year. The foundation of the new scheme, he admitted, was the use of British credit, but he explained that his former pledges were not violated by his support of this measure, because Ireland was now retained as an integral part of the United Kingdom. What he had 'always' objected to was the use or risk of British credit for a country to be placed in an independent position. It may be pointed out, however, that at the Round Table Conference, even while insisting that any system of Home Rule should preserve the unquestioned supremacy of the imperial Parliament, he contended that the land scheme should be based entirely upon Irish credit and Irish resources.

An acrimonious temper continued through all these controversies to characterize the warring Liberal sections. Mr. Chamberlain charged the Gladstonians with being 'a party of disintegration,' and with deserting the principles of a lifetime at the bidding of 'an imperious leader.' When taunted on his own alliance with the Tories, he retorted by scolding old friends for their alliance with a party which desired to separate Ireland from Great Britain. Scorn was heaped with unmeasured hand upon the Liberal Unionists, Mr. Gladstone describing them as 'that unhappy, unfortunate, ill-starred abortion of a party.' When Mr. Chamberlain referred with disapproval to the action of the Government of 1880-85 Mr. Morley severely censured the conduct of a man who sat at a council table with colleagues, and who after a few years had elapsed, to serve some paltry purpose of the moment, held them up to obloquy and contempt. Such conduct, in his opinion, was a case of hitting below the belt, for which they did not find a parallel in the worst times of our political history. The penitent insisted, however, on his right to acknowledge mistakes in action for which he was jointly responsible. 'He is free,' retorted his old friend, 'if he is so minded to figure in a white sheet; he is not

free to plant his colleagues in the pillory and pelt them with missiles.'

The Unionist alliance was strengthened in 1891. Mr. Chamberlain appeared then in Birmingham on a common platform with the Conservatives. Addressing a joint Unionist meeting and referring to his co-operation with those who were formerly his opponents, he said: 'We have both of us to put a good number of our prejudices and our opinions in our pockets. In some respects in which they think I was going too far, I am content to wait; in some respects in which I do not think they are going far enough they are content to go further.' A few days later a demonstration, promoted by the two local sections of the Unionist party, took place in the Town Hall, and was addressed by Mr. Matthews, the Home Secretary in the Conservative Government, as well as by Mr. Chamberlain. Thus the Radical Unionists followed in the step which the leader of the Whig Unionists took five years earlier. The local coalition was completed at a luncheon on November 25, when both branches of the predominant party in Birmingham entertained Lord Salisbury who declared that the Conservatives had received from their allies a measure of unstinted support which was new to Parliamentary history. Mr. Chamberlain, alluding to his former hope of reconciliation with the Liberals, took this notable occasion to say that now he neither looked for nor desired reunion. In this manner he threw down the last remnant of the bridge between himself and the party led by Mr. Gladstone.

In legislation the effect of the alliance was obvious. The author of the unauthorized Liberal programme boasted that the Conservative Government had carried out the whole of it 'in principle at all events.' Certainly, under intuition of 'a minister without a portfolio' they made remarkable progress in reform. County Councils were established in England, Wales, and Scotland (1888-89); free education, won by the ingenuity of the Scots in 1889, was extended to the remainder of the country in 1891, the Government yielding in this matter to pressure by the Liberals; and facilities were granted for the obtaining of allotments and small holdings, although they were so limited and restricted that they proved of less value than their promoters expected. Mr. Chamberlain, grateful for what he could get, refrained from driving his friends on the Treasury bench too hard. For instance, when compulsory powers were proposed in connection with the Small Holdings Bill (1892) he opposed the amendment because the Government would not agree to it, and it would therefore be fatal to the measure. His consideration for Conservative feelings drew upon him an outburst of sarcasm from Mr. Gladstone, who appealed for 'a little of the ancient faith which he used to have.'

I do not ask him to urge all his principles and all his opinions with the vehemence, and in the alarming terms by which in other days he excited such horror among honourable members opposite, by which he contrived to scare from the Liberal party many good though timid men who are now associated with him in the closest and most harmonious relations ; I will not ask him to revert to his famous dicta, by which he earned an immortality, not perhaps altogether acceptable to his present humour ; but I ask him in some degree to recall the sentiments cherished by him in his youth, and in his middle age, to join with us—at least so far as reason will support our proposition—in something better than referring to the discretion and arbitrary will of the Government opposite, to say whether some improvement in our law shall take place or not.

This passage, spoken in a mocking tone by the Grand Old Man as he stood beside his former lieutenant, was driven home by the cheers of the Liberals.

XXII

NEW LEADERS AND NEW CRIES

THE formal leadership of a Parliamentary party was at last obtained by Mr. Chamberlain in 1892. Lord Hartington, whose steadfast, disinterested support of the Conservative Government contributed to its long life, had succeeded his father as Duke of Devonshire, and on February 8, at a meeting of the Liberal Unionist members, his Radical colleague was appointed their leader in the House of Commons. The duke described him as the most brilliant member of the advanced section of the Liberal party, and Sir Henry James, who might have been set up as a rival, spoke of him as the one man who could fill the vacant position. Mr. Chamberlain said he had always been an advanced Liberal and had in no sense changed his views. At the same time he made a significant remark with reference to disestablishment. He stated that he had been, and still was willing to subordinate his opinions on that subject to the interests of the Union, but subject to this reservation, he retained his freedom to put them forward when he thought right to do so. This was a reservation which betrayed uneasiness either on his own part or on the part of some of those with whom he was acting. Conservative journalists, with obvious misgivings, urged him to be prudent, now that he was in a position of responsibility. 'The statesman,' one of his monitors wrote, 'who has to act as guide and moderator at St. Stephen's will be careful, no doubt, not to compromise his authority by an indiscreet or extravagant insistence on remote and contentious issues.'

Mr. Chamberlain's leadership increased the antipathy between Liberals and Liberal Unionists. Lord Hartington had not incurred personal dislike. Although he struck hard, he provoked no ill-will. Radicals concentrated their anger on the politician from whom they had expected most, and whose motives they impugned. After his declaration in the hearing of Lord Salisbury at the end of 1891, that he neither looked for nor desired reunion with his former colleagues, renewed objection was taken to his presence near Mr. Gladstone on the front Opposition bench. He still insisted, however, on his right to a seat there. 'Where are the Whigs?' he scornfully asked, in his first authoritative speech—a speech in which he defended Lord

Salisbury, and challenged his opponents to declare their policy on Ireland and Egypt. Amid great cheering Mr. Morley retorted by asking—'Where is the Radical?'

Two other new chiefs appeared at the beginning of 1892. Mr. W. H. Smith, one of the least eloquent men who ever led the House of Commons,¹ died during the recess, and his place was taken by Mr. Balfour; Mr. Parnell's life had at the same time expired in gloom, and his group was henceforth directed by Mr. John Redmond, under whom all the Nationalists were subsequently joined. Mr. Chamberlain's relations with Mr. Smith's successor became thoroughly cordial. There was little in common between them in tradition or temperament but they were united in a determination to resist 'Gladstonianism,' and especially to defeat Home Rule. With this object, as Mr. Chamberlain said, both put a good number of their opinions in their pockets. Some of his own slipped out and disappeared.

The old Liberal chief was meanwhile preparing for the final effort of his life, and as the struggle approached, his former lieutenant's attacks upon him swelled in vehemence. He showed no feeling of respect in strictures on 'the imperious leader.' While more than ever considering him a giant among pygmies, Mr. Chamberlain remarked with regret that Mr. Gladstone had allowed his great name and reputation to cover the proceedings of persons who were altogether unworthy of him, and to cloak the designs and the methods of a faction whom, in the maturity of his judgment, he described as the enemies of his country. An impression of the reserve which had crept into their communications may be gathered from the following minute account, given by the present writer at the time of an incident which occurred in March, 1892, on the aged statesman's return from a sojourn in France:²—

When Mr. Chamberlain arrived at the House, he found Mr. Gladstone in the corner usually occupied by himself. The member for Midlothian had moved there in order to hear the speeches of his Irish friends on the Belfast Bill. Mr. Chamberlain, seeing the position of affairs, did not advance beyond the bar. A quarter of an hour later he looked in from behind the Speaker's chair, and remained a few minutes, but his old chief was still in the corner, and he did not seek to disturb him. So he went away again. When he came back once more just as questions were commencing, his seat was occupied by Mr. Robert Spencer. He advanced to claim it, and on seeing him Mr. Spencer at once moved to another place. Mr. Chamberlain now found himself the neighbour of Mr. Gladstone. The position of the two gentlemen was observed by the whole House, and evi-

¹ A man, says Mr. Massey in his history, who speaks seldom and who speaks ill is the best leader of the House of Commons. 'And, no doubt,' adds Mr. Bagehot, 'the slow-speeched English gentleman rather sympathizes with slow speech in others.' Mr. Smith was slow-speeched, but while he spoke seldom he spoke sensibly.

² Aberdeen Free Press.

dently much interest was felt as to what would happen. There was a considerable space between them, so that no recognition was absolutely necessary. Mr. Chamberlain, however, moved up to Mr. Gladstone and shook hands with him. The member for Midlothian was as courteous as usual, but seemed cold in manner. He conversed for a few moments with his former lieutenant, holding his hand behind his ear, and looking grave and stern. Then he turned round, as if to listen to what was being said in the House, and Mr. Chamberlain promptly withdrew to his own place.

During the General Election in summer the Unionist champion caused deep offence by his harsh allusions to Mr. Gladstone. At Birmingham he remarked: 'In the last few years we have seen a section of the Liberal party—alas! that I should stand here and be obliged to confess it—we have seen them exhibiting a blind subservience to a leader who in his old age has forgotten the principles which he expounded so eloquently in his splendid maturity.' A fortnight later he spoke in a similar strain. 'It is sad to think,' said Mr. Chamberlain, 'that now in his old age the dignified statesman should give place to the furious mob orator. He appears to be losing his head and losing his temper.' Taunts such as these embittered a quarrel which was sufficiently lamentable without any aggravation. Dr. Dale felt constrained to write that the split in the party had made an immense difference in his private life. It sundered friendships even in Birmingham.

The electioneering argument presented incisively by Mr. Chamberlain might be summed up in his words: 'From Unionists you will get a policy of reform; from the Home Rulers you can get Home Rule and nothing else.' Even in the case of Ireland, he boasted of the record of the Conservative Government: peace and tranquillity restored, the benefits of Mr. Gladstone's Land Act conferred upon leaseholders, three Land Purchase Acts carried, and a system of relief for congested districts introduced. We have seen that several points in his own programme had been adopted. As for the future, he contended that the Unionists alone could carry the measures desired by the Liberals. He told the Welsh that by the introduction of Home Rule the question of religious equality was indefinitely postponed. A letter from him read at a meeting at Ruabon on December 29, 1891, caused a great deal of comment and among his Conservative allies not a little consternation. 'I am convinced,' he wrote, 'that the only chance for the speedy satisfaction of the legitimate claims of Welsh Nonconformity is to be found in the defeat of Home Rule. Every Welsh Dissenter who votes for a Gladstonian at the next election votes, first, for the indefinite postponement of Welsh disestablishment and land reform.' This attempt to catch votes with the bait of disestablishment was ridiculed by Liberals, who predicted that Mr. Chamberlain would secure only a very small basket, while

Conservatives disliked its use by one with whom they might be associated in Government.

Another bait was offered in the form of old age pensions. Mr. Chamberlain, as the reader will see, denied in after years that he had ever given a definite promise of pensions, but at this crisis he dangled them before the voters. At several meetings in 1891 he proposed them in lieu of Home Rule, and during the Election in 1892 he brought the proposal 'into the front rank of political questions.' There is no doubt that the prospect of provision for old age excited the expectations of many poor people. It is equally certain that Mr. Chamberlain's sanguine temperament led him to believe that a pension scheme was within the range of practical politics. If he deceived others, he deceived also himself.

Enormous energy was displayed by Mr. Chamberlain during Mr. Gladstone's final appeal for power. He delivered more speeches in July, 1892, than in any other month in his life. His vigour and enthusiasm aroused the Midlands, and stimulated Unionists everywhere in the country. To keep his old chief out—or at any rate to prevent him from having a working majority—was the object to which he devoted all his electioneering resources. His quarrel with the Gladstonians was not now limited to the Irish question, but extended to the whole scope and range of politics, and it was intensified by personal feeling to a much greater extent than the ordinary struggles between the two great parties in the State. The real leader on the Government side was not any Conservative holder of office but the Liberal statesman who had been 'a Minister without a portfolio.' While he spoke professedly as a Radical, he fought whole-heartedly for all the Conservative causes, and it was against him chiefly that the champions on the other side pressed. He was a conspicuous target in the field, and all aimed at him their hardest blows.

The battle went slightly in favour of the Home Rulers, taking the United Kingdom as a whole, but Mr. Chamberlain came out of it with honour. Speaking of the four counties of which Birmingham is the metropolis, he was able to boast that the Unionists had almost swept their enemies from the ground. He found additional consolation in the fact that they had obtained a majority in Great Britain itself. Mr. Gladstone was disappointed. His electioneers had been, as in 1886, too confident, although not so far astray as then. He had expected to outnumber his opponents by eighty or a hundred, and instead of that the combined Liberals and Nationalists were in a majority of only forty.

A remarkable scene was witnessed in the new Parliament, when Mr. Chamberlain rising again from the front Opposition bench, took part in the debate which preceded the change of Government. Mr.

Asquith from a back seat had in his cool, trenchant style, and with his finished rhetoric, moved an amendment of no confidence in the Conservative advisers of Her Majesty. His motion was submitted on August 8, and three days later the House was crowded to a degree reached only on the very rarest occasions. The benches were supplemented by chairs, which were placed near the bar. Mr. Chamberlain, greeted by the newly-chosen Unionists with an enthusiasm which expressed their pride and gratitude, delivered a brilliant speech exposing the different policies of the different sections of the Home Rule majority, and cross-examining the leaders as to their views on great topics. He expressed the fear that a Liberal Government would decide on an immediate, or at all events an early evacuation of Egypt. Ten years previously he had ridiculed the idea of annexation or of a Protectorate, or even of an indefinite supervision of the country on the Nile. 'We think,' he then said, 'our possessions are sufficiently ample, our duties and responsibilities too onerous and complicated.' But in the interval he had cast off his 'parochial-mindedness' and now his tone was imperial. 'I do not believe that democracies are anything but keenly sensitive to the honour and interests of the nation to which they belong, and I do not believe that the British democracy will favour a policy of scuttle.' This was one of his parting declarations as he quitted the company of Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal lieutenants, never again to sit with them on the same bench. When he returned to the front Opposition bench he was in the company of Conservatives. That, however, was many years later.

An interesting French view of Mr. Chamberlain at this period was given by Monsieur Filon.¹ It is sympathetic, and not without discrimination. 'He is,' writes the French observer, 'the man of the present hour; he marks the second age of democracy, that in which, after having destroyed, it has the mission and the duty to rebuild. . . . Mr. Chamberlain is more powerful than ever. . . . He triumphs in the midst of the defeat of his party. In his first speech in this Parliament he has displayed all his oratorical mastery, that smiling force, that mixture of energy and finesse which characterizes him, with that intelligence of the time, that touch of modernity which makes of him the first interpreter and the sole possible regulator of the needs and the passions of the democracy.'

Before following the fighter to his fierce, final struggle with his old chief, the reader may turn for a moment to Highbury, and obtain a glimpse of a dinner party at his home. The picture is given by observant and friendly Dr. Crosskey, who in failing health, writes at the close of 1892: 'Last week I confess to a rather adventurous expedition in the shape of a dinner at Chamberlain's, where luxuries were

¹ *Profilis anglais*, by A. Filon.

not exactly the product of invalid cookery. But it was to *meet a bishop*, and therefore, of course, a temptation to such a hybrid ecclesiastic as I am. But the occasion was a remarkable instance of the thorough way Chamberlain does things. You know the Bishop of Chester has been propounding a scheme about the Drink traffic, in which Chamberlain is greatly interested, and he therefore invites him to dinner, and asks to meet him one of the chief Brewers of Birmingham, one of the strongest of Teetotallers, another Bishop (Coventry), and some leading clergy, Dale and myself as Nonconformists, and some few others, Tories and Gladstonians. After dinner he (as it were) took the chair, and opened a discussion on the subject, in which teetotallers, publicans and sinners, and dignitaries of the church, *and* dissenters took part in a perfectly frank and good-tempered way, while Chamberlain kept on the watch for something that might be practicable in the strife of parties.¹ The open-minded impartiality of Highbury was in vivid contrast to the emphasis and pugnacity of Parliament and the public platform.

¹ *Henry William Crosskey : His Life and Work*, by R. A. Armstrong.

XXIII

LAST DUEL WITH GLADSTONE

A LOST soul' was the hideous aspect in which an Irish member and journalist with the eyes of resentment saw Mr. Chamberlain at the opening of his final struggle with Mr. Gladstone. The phrase, like the repeated cry of 'Judas!' revealed the passion of the time. It recalled what Macaulay wrote in a letter describing the carrying of the Reform Bill in 1831: 'And the jaw of Peel fell; and the face of Twiss was as the face of a damned soul; and Herries looked like Judas taking his necktie off for the last operation.' The hate of the Home Rulers was concentrated on Mr. Chamberlain. He was their arch-enemy—the man who, as they said, betrayed Mr. Gladstone, and who was now most greatly to be feared. He crossed the floor of the House with the Liberals when his old chief took office for the last time, forty-eight Unionists sitting below the Ministerial gangway, and their leader occupying the corner at the head of the third bench. From this post, with constant vigilance and unwavering tenacity, he waged war on the new Government, while the Nationalists looked across at him with hate.

His terrible feeling against his former friends was commented upon even by his principal colleague. In a letter to Mr. Goschen, who had decided to join the Conservative party, the Duke of Devonshire wrote on January 10, 1893: 'To tell the absolute truth, in confidence, I think that Chamberlain, though his tone was perfectly friendly towards you, will be more at ease when he knows of your decision. Both Chamberlain and H. James are in high spirits and are full of fight. The animosity of the former against the Government is something quite remarkable.'¹

The presence of Unionists in the midst of the Gladstonians when Home Rule was the supreme issue, was considered no less disagreeable than had been the company of their leaders on the front Opposition bench in the previous Parliament. If parties had been arranged according to their political inclinations, the Nationalists would have gone with the Liberals to the Government side, and Mr. Chamberlain's followers would have sat with the Conservatives on the Opposition benches, but this plan could not be carried out, as the Irish Home

¹ *Life of Lord Goschen*, by the Hon. Arthur D. Elliot.

Rulers always maintain the same position in the House. Whichever party is in power they remain in an attitude of formal aloofness and independence. It was decided that two benches on the Ministerial side should be reserved for the Liberal Unionists, but unpleasantness was not prevented by this allocation of seats. Gladstonians resented the presence of enemies in their camp and Mr. Chamberlain was described as stabbing their leader in the back. Never did he in Parliament confront Mr. Gladstone face to face. They were always bodily on the same side.

Their prolonged duel over the Home Rule Bill of 1893 was the most desperate and brilliant in modern Parliamentary warfare. No mercy was shown by either. The memory of other days, when as leader and lieutenant they stood shoulder to shoulder, served only to intensify their passion. Sometimes victory leaned to one side, sometimes to the other. The Liberal chief with expiring energy put forth his splendid matchless powers. In the colleague whom he had raised to the Cabinet he met an antagonist who excited him to the highest efforts, and spectators were thrilled by the flashing features, the grand gestures, the swelling tones of the veteran as he turned on nimble-witted Mr. Chamberlain, and met taunts with raillery and consuming scorn. Sometimes he sat huddled on the Treasury bench, looking as if exhausted by the cares of State, with face puckered, and hand coiled behind ear. Then suddenly he would spring to his feet, his figure would expand, his deep voice would clutch the House, and he would show no less physical vigour than intellectual force. With amazement, and even with awe—

We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which served for that titanic strife.

In his leadership Mr. Gladstone received all the assistance which party loyalty and personal affection could prompt from his deputy, Sir William Harcourt, who relieved him in the late hours whenever he could be induced to stay away. The arrangement was described by a witty lawyer who rose to the bench as that of 'the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night.' Mr. Asquith, who had entered the Cabinet as Home Secretary, gave brilliant aid, and Mr. Morley, although not so prominent as in 1886, was a stiff fighter for the Home Rule Bill. Mr. Gladstone inspired all his colleagues with zeal. They thought it an honour to serve so famous a chief. On himself, however, fell the principal duty and labour in defence of Home Rule. It was to carry out his Irish policy that he spent his old age in the political arena; this was his final fight in a scene where he had stood foremost, and he would not have been mortal if he were not touched in some degree by personal rivalry. In Gladstone, as in Savonarola, there was 'the blending of ambition with the

highest motives.' Conviction and ambition incited him now to an effort worthy of his fame.

On the front Opposition bench sat several skilful debaters—Mr. Balfour, Mr. Goschen, and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. Along with them was Lord Randolph Churchill. No place had been found for him in Lord Salisbury's Government after he quitted it at the end of 1886, but now that the Conservatives were in Opposition he was welcomed back among the leaders. Great expectations were entertained when he rose once more at the table to take part in debate. The Prince of Wales came to hear him, and the chamber was crammed to every corner. Few persons, however, who were present at the opening of the speech in which the once audacious fighter, now ill and nervous, craved the indulgence of the House, would desire to see again such a pathetic picture. The trembling voice, the twitching face, the restless hands, gave pain to men who recalled the bold, dashing, reckless leader of the Fourth Party. There were a few flashes in this and subsequent speeches, but they were merely the flickers of an expiring career, and the combatant, who crossed swords with Mr. Chamberlain in other days, and whose ally he had become, was doomed to eat his heart out in failing health, while the other led the resistance to what he described as 'the great betrayal.'

Mr. Chamberlain was always in the thickest of the fight. His speeches were as pungent and vivacious as those he delivered against the Tories in 1885. Night after night he dashed into conflict, attacking with inexhaustible devices the provisions of the bill, denouncing the Liberal leaders and exposing the tactics of the Nationalists. He received stinging provocation in the gibes and jeers of Home Rulers, and his retort was always ready and always merciless. His favourite hour was ten o'clock, an hour at which the House was usually responsive. In evening dress, with eye-glass adjusted, the picture of keenness and ruthlessness, the master of every art of controversy, he would rise at his corner and by a phrase or a tone arrest the attention and stimulate the ardour of the antagonists. His aggressive face was in itself an incitement. In his absence, the fight might be aimless and languid, but as soon as he re-entered it the animation of all parties was revived. In words which Mr. Morley applied to Robert Lowe's opposition to the Reform Bill his resistance might be described as 'glittering, energetic, direct and swift.'

Even names continued to be matter of reproach and recrimination. Followers of Mr. Gladstone still gave to Mr. Chamberlain and his friends the title of dissentient Liberals, but against this their old colleagues always protested warmly, claiming, indeed, to be as good and proper Liberals as Mr. Gladstone. 'We do not call you separatists,' said Mr. Chamberlain to the supporters of the Government, although

he had previously done so on the platform, 'and I ask you to call us by the name we have chosen.' The independent name of Liberal Unionists was conceded reluctantly. At the same time the main party, although proud of their leader, objected to being called Gladstonians. They insisted on the simple description, 'Liberals.'

The introduction of the Home Rule Bill by Mr. Gladstone on February 13, 1893, caused enormous excitement. Members waited for hours before the doors were opened; when admission was obtained they rushed forward, elbowing and jostling each other; they strode over benches in their haste to secure seats, and they seized whatever vacant place they could reach, perspiring and panting. Chairs were introduced in front of the bar and also at the upper end of the House. Peers overcrowded their own gallery in a moment, and Lord Rosebery and Lord Spencer found better accommodation among the strangers. The Prince of Wales with his son the Duke of York at his side, sat over the clock, and his future daughter-in-law, then Princess May, was among the ladies behind the grille. When Mr. Gladstone entered, the Nationalists, followed by the Liberals, sprang to their feet and cheered the old man. It was in these circumstances that the scheme which led to so momentous a struggle was submitted, and the excitement lasted for months.

A summary of the debates is not attempted here. Only enough will be reproduced to illustrate the incidents in which Mr. Chamberlain figured. Even in 1893 he was not against Home Rule in the abstract, but he contended that Mr. Gladstone's bill was not consistent with the unity of the Empire, the supremacy of Parliament, or the protection of minorities. It would, in his opinion, lead to separation, and Ireland could not become independent without being a source of danger to the very existence of the empire. 'Her political condition is controlled by her geographical situation, and her interests cannot be allowed to outweigh the interests of the larger country.' In view of Mr. Parnell's revelation of the secret aspirations of Nationalists, Mr. Chamberlain argued that the restrictions in the bill would prevent the proposed settlement from being final. 'You are sowing the seeds of future discontent. You are sowing the seeds of further demands. The time at which the discontent will manifest itself—the time when those demands will be made, will be the time of England's emergency.' This point he emphasized on the second reading. 'We are asked to stake the dignity, the influence, the honour and the wealth of the nation upon this cast. We are asked to do it because we are told we ought to have faith and trust in honourable members opposite (the Nationalists); we are to do it on the assurance that my right honourable friend gives us that a miracle will be wrought in our favour to change the hearts

of men, and alter the springs of human action. Sir, I say the possible danger is too great, and the possible gain is too small.'

In denouncing the bill as a concession to disorder, Mr. Chamberlain made effective use of indiscreet utterances by Nationalist members in Ireland and America. He had a wonderful supply of extracts, and when challenged by the orators as to his version of their views, he would promptly take a corroborative clipping from his pocket. Mr. Asquith scornfully described him as 'scavenging in the dust-heap of the speeches of Irish members, and gleefully piecing together angry phrases dropped on Irish platforms in moments of exasperation and despair.' 'Dust-heaps!' ironically exclaimed Mr. Chamberlain, as if the phrase were well applied.

His own speeches were freely quoted by the other side, and so complete was the contrast between his new tone and his old, that Mr. Birrell read his early utterances 'with the kind of melancholy with which one reads the letters of somebody who is dead.' Mr. Morley jeered at him as the greatest reformed character in the House. 'I suppose,' remarked his old friend, 'that many excuses may be made for him: it may be said that in his former speeches he was only sowing his political wild oats, and that he is a most interesting and repentant prodigal. But surely the milk of human kindness runs so richly in his veins that it should make him a little more charitable to his brother penitents who, like him, have altered their opinions, and who have bidden good-bye to prairie value as he has bidden good-bye to ransom and to natural rights.' A charge of inconsistency did not disturb the Unionist leader. His defence was always ready. When confronted, for instance, with his earlier proposal for an Irish Board of Control, he explained that the exposure of the Nationalists and their methods by the Parnell Commission had changed his opinion as to the possibility of entrusting even these limited powers to the present representatives of the majority in Ireland. On one occasion, however, he turned on those who served up extracts in his own fashion. Loosely quoting *Romola*, he cried disdainfully to Sir William Harcourt: 'Don't you be bringing up my words after swallowing them, and pretend that they are none the worse for the operation.'¹

A kindly sentiment, evoked by the maiden speech of Mr. Chamberlain's son, Austen, softened the hearts of some of the combatants for a brief hour. Austen had been returned for East Worcestershire, and was introduced by his father and his uncle, Mr. Richard Chamberlain. The three were of similar size and figure, and when the young man spoke in the Home Rule debate, his resemblance to the Unionist leader

¹ Niccolo: 'Don't you be bringing up my speeches again after you've swallowed them, and handing them about as if they were none the worse.'

was wonderful. Even the gestures were alike, and there was the same manner of handling an eye-glass. Only the orchid was lacking. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, speaking with clearness and self-possession, alluded to Mr. Gladstone in a tone of irony, but the Grand Old Man who turned to watch him and listened with interest, gave a friendly cheer when he sat down. Afterwards Mr. Asquith went from the Treasury bench to whisper a word of congratulation to the father (who had praised his own maiden speech six years earlier) and a large number of colleagues congratulated the debutant. The most touching incident occurred at a later stage of the debate, when Mr. Gladstone, in his finest manner, alluded to 'a speech that must have been dear and refreshing to a father's heart.' Mr. Chamberlain's pale face quivered as he heard the generous words.

The political quarrel was continued, however, with increasing acrimony. 'My right honourable friend and I nowadays seem very sharply divided,' said Mr. Gladstone on one occasion, with a pathetic ring of the voice. Early in the Committee stage the friend who had become his most determined opponent provoked a scene by declaring that the Irish members had been squared. 'How much would it take to square *you*?' asked a Radical. The retort followed like a flash: 'It would take a great deal more than the honourable member would ever be able to pay.' On another occasion, complaining that the majority had not put down a single amendment to the bill, Mr. Chamberlain sneeringly said: 'They have come here prepared to swallow anything the Government puts before them as a sort of jubilee testimonial to the Prime Minister.' Mr. Gladstone, in retort, with finger pointed back at him, accused him of infinite reiteration, and declared: 'We do not mean to play his game.' Again, when Mr. Chamberlain, according to his habit, quoted former statements by Irish members, Mr. Gladstone invited him to begin the work of retraction. 'If we are to stand in a white sheet my right honourable friend will wear the ornamental garment of the largest size.' Frequently, indeed, he was answered with reminders of his own past. 'In inconsistencies, in contradictions, in waverings, in violent speeches, made in both extremes, no man in the House,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'can for a moment compete with the member for Birmingham, and it would be an interminable task to bring into juxtaposition his innumerable contrarieties against himself.'

Dramatic debates followed each other with exciting rapidity, and usually it was Mr. Chamberlain who struck the note of passion. Standing near Liberals whose present dislike was as great as their former affection, he linked their great leader with the Nationalists in stern denunciation. For instance, when Mr. Gladstone introduced the

'guillotine,' an arbitrary closing of discussion at prescribed periods, Mr. Chamberlain jeered at him as a good man struggling with adversity. 'There,' he said, pointing to the Irish benches, 'sit the men who pull the strings of the Prime Minister of England. Under the threats of his Irish masters, under pressure from his least-experienced supporters (indicating the Radicals), he comes down here to move a resolution which is in contradiction to all the principles which he has declared in the whole course of his Parliamentary life.' Later the same day, replying to Sir William Harcourt, he complained of an attempt to erect the name and the age of the Prime Minister into a fetish 'Judas!' cried a Nationalist, as if the exclamation were a sufficient reply.

'As watchful as a stag,' Mr. Chamberlain missed no opportunity of prejudicing the cause of the Home Rulers. His merciless methods were seen in an encounter between himself and Mr. John Dillon. He had quoted a speech in which the member for Mayo boasted that when the Irish had a Parliament in Dublin they would have the police and the constitution under their control and would 'remember those who had been the enemies of the people.' This was seized upon as evidence that the Irish Unionists would be in danger. On hearing the extract quoted, Mr. Dillon desired an opportunity to refresh his recollection of the speech. Subsequently, on being again challenged to disown it, he stated that it was delivered a short time after 'the massacre of Mitchelstown.' This was an affair in which the police fired on a crowd, and one man was shot dead and two others were mortally wounded. It caused a painful impression in England, and Mr. Gladstone's 'Remember Mitchelstown' became a political watchword. Mr. Dillon now gave a pathetic account of the incident, and said the recollection of it was hot in his mind when he used the language to which objection was taken. His plea of provocation, uttered with emotion, moved many members. Mr. Chamberlain, however, listened with an ominous gleam in his eyes. A friend whispered to him on hearing the reference to Mitchelstown, and went out to verify dates. He allowed the eloquent Irishman to proceed with his moving tale, but when it was finished he sprang to his feet, his face now aglow with excitement. He noted the plea that at the time of the threatening speech Mr. Dillon was thrilling with the horrors of the massacre. Here the Liberals cheered. 'Do you know,' he retorted, 'that the massacre of Mitchelstown took place on September 9, 1887, and that the honourable member's speech was delivered nine months previously, on December 5, 1886?' A roar of cheering then came from the Unionists, who exulted without restraint over the discomfiture of the Nationalist. 'He has been unmasked before,' said Mr. Balfour, 'but never so skilfully, never so completely as to-night.' For the error thus exposed Mr. Dillon apologized next day.

Inconsistency was charged against the leader of the Liberal Unionists in reference to the retention of Irish members. If a Parliament were set up in Ireland, should there still be representatives of that country at Westminster? Mr. Chamberlain's attitude on this point altered more than once, but he contended that the changes were consequent on the varying conditions of the problem. At Sheffield, in 1874, one of the recommendations of Home Rule to his mind was that 'the legislature would move at an accelerated pace without the Irish members.' In the 1886 bill Mr. Gladstone proposed their total exclusion, but Mr. Chamberlain contended that their inclusion was absolutely necessary. The 'key to the position,' as he then said, was to maintain the representation of Ireland in the imperial Parliament. If this concession were made, he hoped that the imminent danger of a fatal breach in the ranks of the Liberal party might be averted. Now, in the 1893 bill, it was proposed that Irish members should be retained at Westminster for imperial affairs, but not for affairs exclusively British. Mr. Chamberlain had said in 1886 that he did not believe there would be really the least difficulty in allowing the Irish members to come to Westminster and there to vote only on questions which were not referred to them at Dublin.¹ Now the 'in-and-out' arrangement excited his ridicule. The Irish delegates, as he remarked, would be neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. They would be kept dangling about the lobby—here to-day and gone to-morrow, never knowing when they might be called in to play their part. It was urged by the Opposition, with irresistible force as *The Times* recorded, that the presence in the imperial Parliament of a body of eighty Irish representatives, not entitled to vote on questions affecting Great Britain only, would make the existence of a stable majority impossible, would turn the House of Commons into an assembly changing its character and composition from day to day and from hour to hour, would destroy the continuity of our Parliamentary history, and deprive the system of Cabinet Government of its very foundation.

Yielding to criticism, the Ministers, who did not feel complete faith in their own plan, consented to retain Irish members for all purposes. This was the concession which Mr. Chamberlain demanded in 1886. Now he rejected it. He discovered that if the Irish representatives were retained the interests of Great Britain would be controlled by delegates, 'nominated by priests, elected by illiterates, and subsidised by the enemies of this country.' Home Rulers were furious at his change of front and Sir William Harcourt accused him of personal hostility to the Prime Minister. 'Whatever the proposals of Mr. Gladstone may be, they secure the bitter—I might almost say the venomous—opposition of the right honourable gentleman.' The argument of the

¹ *Life of Henry Labouchere*, Algar Thorold.

Unionists was that in demanding the retention of the Irish members in 1886 they contemplated a subordinate legislature in Dublin, whereas the Parliament now proposed would be practically independent, but Sir William Harcourt retorted by pointing out that in 1886 Mr. Chamberlain held that the authority of the imperial Parliament could be maintained only by keeping the Irish at Westminster. Thus the controversy went on in a circle.

The Devil's Advocate was a character in which Mr. Gladstone presented his chief antagonist. The finance provisions being under consideration, Mr. Chamberlain delivered a long speech, in which he subjected them to a searching examination, and made many piquant personal allusions to the Ministers. Mr. Gladstone, blazing with anger, said he had examined the subject in the spirit of exaggeration and hostility of the Devil's Advocate. 'My right honourable friend,' continued the Prime Minister, as he turned and faced Mr. Chamberlain, 'has a practice which is one of the most unsatisfactory and one of the most mischievous that can be introduced into public life. He constantly and deliberately, and with the utmost confidence and infallibility, ascribes to men who have a right to stand on a level with him, and who were at one time his colleagues and were supposed to be his friends, motives for their acts the direct contrary of that which they state themselves, and motives which he knows they indignantly disclaim.' This rebuke, spoken in tones of mingled sorrow and anger, evoked passionate cheering. Mr. Chamberlain did not quail under it, nor did he take offence at the rôle which was imputed to him. On the contrary, he adopted the character. 'I would remind my right honourable friend,' he coolly retorted on the following day 'that the function of the Devil's Advocate is one which has often been most usefully fulfilled. There have been numbers of cases in connection with the ecclesiastical organization of which he forms a part, in which it has been his privilege to expose many doubtful virtues, and to destroy on more than one occasion the angelic theory. Sir, I modestly hope I may enjoy a similar privilege.'

A *Punch* cartoon depicted the protracted duel between the leading foemen, the G. O. M. (as the Grand Old Man was called) fighting on horseback with sword and 'Joe' on foot, with bayonet; and in accompanying lines we read:—

There is not a swordsman like Will,
Has not been since old days of Dizzy;
The foe who would baffle his skill,
Will have to look sharp, and be busy.
But Joe with his bayonet-prods
Is a most unmistakable 'snorter';
He's willing to fight against odds,
And he neither gives in, nor gives quarter.

At last the passions of the two sides burst forth with uncontrollable fury on the night of July 27, when the House of Commons was disgraced by a *mêlée* in which members struck each other with their fists. This was the forty-sixth and last sitting in Committee: the guillotine was to fall finally on debate at ten o'clock. Members were excited when, a few minutes before that hour, Mr. Chamberlain rose from his corner. His face was unusually pale, and his voice emotional as he spoke of the 'discreditable farce' to which the mother of Parliaments had been reduced by the action of a man whom they were all ready to recognize as one of the greatest of Parliamentary figures. With taunts he inflamed the passion of parties and with increasing vehemence he proceeded: 'I say that this bill has been changed in its most vital features, and yet it has always been found perfect by members behind the Treasury Bench. The Prime Minister calls "black," and they say "it is good;" the Prime Minister calls "white," and they say "it is better."' 'It is always,' he declared, as the clock pointed to ten, 'the voice of a god. Never since the time of Herod has there been such slavish adulation.'

By the time the last words were uttered the uproar was furious, and amid the clamour Mr. T. P. O'Connor's voice was heard exclaiming 'Judas! Judas! Judas!' A division being challenged under the guillotine many members proceeded to the lobby. Others remained to shout, and several pointing at Mr. O'Connor, cried 'name' and 'shame.' Mr. Chamberlain desired that no notice should be taken of the offensive expression to which he had become used, but his friends insisted even amid the turmoil on calling attention to it, and demanded that the word should be taken down. A private member added a farcical element to the scene by occupying the Speaker's chair. Beneath him at the table was the Chairman of Committee, nervous and hesitating. Mr. Logan, a Radical, crossed the floor to make a remark to a Conservative, and being told to move on he defiantly sat down on the front Opposition bench beside its regular occupants. Thereupon, two or three members on the second bench—Mr. Hayes Fisher, first of all—placed their hands at his neck and shoulders and pushed him off.

This was the signal for the *mêlée*. Immediately a number of Nationalists rushed across the gangway among their opponents. Fists were used, and there was much pushing and jostling. Colonel Saunderson, a popular but aggressive Irish Unionist, was hit twice on the side of the head, and Home Rulers asserted that he in turn struck several of them. Mr. Gladstone, watching the scene from his place on the Treasury bench, looked a picture of sorrow and humiliation. A Conservative harangued him from the other side of the table, and others cruelly cried, 'this is your work.' The scuffle continued for five minutes, and

members who had gone to the division lobbies returned to see what was occurring. A loud continuous hiss from the strangers, a 'sound of public scorn' never heard before within the memory of the oldest Parliamentarian, made the House conscious of its disgrace, and when Mr. Speaker Peel, who had been sent for, entered and mounted the high chair, looking majestic and terrible, all members sat down; and with his calm, stern, dignified 'Order! order!' peace was instantly restored. Charges, reproaches, recriminations followed; apology was offered at once by Mr. O'Connor, and next day regret was expressed by Mr. Fisher and Mr. Logan; and the House was enjoined by the Speaker to allow the regrettable incident to pass into oblivion. It could not, however, drop out of the memory of any who witnessed it. Macaulay's comment on another Parliamentary episode might be applied to the incident: 'It was like seeing Cæsar stabbed in the Senate House, or seeing Oliver taking the mace from the table; a sight only to be seen once, and never to be forgotten.'

'The argument of tyrants,' was again detected by the Unionist champion at the next stage of the bill. On August 21, Mr. Gladstone having proposed to closure the discussion on report, Mr. Chamberlain delivered an animated protest against his 'dictatorship,' and concluded with a furious attack: 'To destroy the Empire; to punish England for not having given him a majority; to break up the party to which his fame and reputation owe a great deal: these are not enough for the First Lord of the Treasury; he must also stifle discussion: he must humiliate the House of Commons which has always honoured him as one of its ornaments.' In language such as this, Sir William Harcourt found violent injustice, exaggerated virulence, and personal rancour towards the Liberal leader. At the final stage, on September 1, Mr. Chamberlain uttered a personal appeal. He seemed very earnest as he stood at the end of his bench, with a white orchid in his black coat, holding in his hand a sheet or two of notes. In measured tones he expostulated with the Liberals on their treatment of himself and other Unionists. They had asserted that he was influenced by personal feeling. He appealed to them to put themselves in his place. 'If you believed, as we believe, that the policy of the Government is irreparably fatal, would you think that any opposition could be too strenuous, too prolonged?' Thus he spoke for several minutes. His former friends, watching him closely, listened with attention—perhaps even with respect.

On the bill eighty-two sittings were spent by the Commons; and they passed its third reading by a majority of 34. A week later, by a majority of 378, it was thrown out in the House of Lords. Some critics said that the protracted opposition and detailed speeches of Unionist members in the House of Commons were both ineffective and

superfluous, seeing that the measure went through their own Chamber in spite of them and that it would in any case have been rejected by the peers. Mr. Chamberlain and his friends, however, declared that they looked beyond their own walls. Their object was by their exposure of the bill to justify its expected rejection by the Second Chamber, and to educate the country. In that exposure, the most effective part had been undoubtedly played by the statesman who formerly advocated Home Rule. He did more than any one else to thwart the last ambition of his first leader.

Mr. Gladstone lingered on the Parliamentary scene till the beginning of the following March, when, baffled by foes, embarrassed by impaired sight and hearing, and out of sympathy with his Cabinet on the question of naval estimates, he handed the controversy with the House of Lords down to his successors. His long day's task was done, and when he took off his armour his opponents tried to forget his political projects, and to think only of his personal merit and genius. A few days after his resignation, Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at Birmingham, described him as the greatest Parliamentary leader of our time. 'Although to my deep regret during the last few years I have felt it to be my duty to oppose to the utmost Mr. Gladstone's policy, I have never either in private or in public said one single word derogatory to his transcendent abilities and to his personal worth. Now that he has ceased to occupy his great position, I can only sincerely deplore the loss which the House of Commons has suffered by the withdrawal of its most illustrious member.' In Parliament he spoke in a similar strain. 'All I would wish to say is that at a time when, unfortunately, voices are sometimes raised in order to envenom political differences, and to transform them into personal animosities, we, who were his loyal followers, but who for some seven years have found ourselves, much to our own regret, compelled to come into sharp conflict with him, would now desire to forget the incidents of that contest and only remember the great services he has rendered to this House and the country.'

In the autumn of 1894, the Unionist leader was gratified by an allusion made to him by Mr. Gladstone in a letter to the Bishop of Chester on the Gothenburg system. 'I am glad to see,' wrote the retired statesman, 'that Mr. Chamberlain is active in your cause.' Moved by this passing remark, Mr. Chamberlain in an interview with a newspaper¹ correspondent dictated the following reference to Mr. Gladstone and himself: 'In the outside world some would have it that they were anything but friends since the political party tie that held them so long in common had been severed. He was glad to say, however, that this was very far from the truth. Amid all the tumult of political strife their personal relationship had continued undiminished

¹ *Birmingham Daily Mail*.

and unbroken. He had received many cherished proofs from Mr. Gladstone of his continued esteem. It was but very lately that he had visited him, and he had found the magnanimity and charm of his character and grand personality enhanced, if possible, in his retirement.'

XXIV

OLD RADICAL AND NEW CONSERVATIVE

'Circumstances have changed, and not I.'—MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

'A gentleman who, only eight years ago, was a spick and span Radical of the very newest type—a gentleman with his pocket full of unauthorized programmes—an apostle of the Ransom school, endeavours to cover his desertion of his party by pretending that the party has altered its creed.'—SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT.

WAS Mr. Chamberlain alone true to the Liberal faith or was his career, as Mr. Healy alleged, cankered with inconsistency? Was he a deserter from his party, or did his party desert its principles? During the years of Liberal government, 1892-95, he rarely agreed with the authorized application of Liberal doctrine. His view was scarcely ever the view of Mr. Gladstone or Lord Rosebery, of Sir William Harcourt or Mr. John Morley. Acting with the Conservatives in resistance to Home Rule, and looking forward to coalition with them in office, he exercised his ingenuity in constructing a common platform on which he could stand beside Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour. A negative policy did not satisfy a leader who professed still to be a Radical. Material reform became his cry.

An imperial note was at the same time struck by Mr. Chamberlain with increasing confidence. Instead of dreading responsibilities he advocated expansion. He was one of the leaders of the forward school in clutching Uganda, 'the black pearl of Africa.' Combating the views of a section of Liberals he said in 1893: 'We cannot imperil our position by refusing to face any responsibilities which come to us in our character as a great nation.' He boasted of the spirit of travel and adventure and enterprise which distinguished the Anglo-Saxon race. 'I and those who agree with me,' he frankly declared, 'believe in the expansion of the empire, and we are not ashamed to confess that we have that feeling; we are not at all troubled by the accusations of Jingoism.' As the guest of a Conservative Club in Birmingham, in January, 1894, he proclaimed his new faith. In almost the words of his first political opponent, Mr. Roebuck, he contemplated the creation of a national party above all sectional aims to preserve the welfare and even the safety of the United Kingdom. It should be 'sensible of the responsibilities of empire, mindful of the traditions

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of a great governing race, and determined to hand down to future generations the great inheritance of a world-wide dominion.' The national party recommended in vain to Lord Hartington in 1887 was for years one of Mr. Chamberlain's dreams. Perhaps it was realized in the coalition of Liberal Unionists and Conservatives! But who can say that the joint party was above sectional aims?

Mr. Chamberlain's view of Liberal measures promoted in the 1892-95 Parliament was expressed in terms which showed how sweeping had grown his quarrel with his former friends. 'The new Radicals are never satisfied with making any one happy unless at the same time they can make somebody else unhappy. Their love for Home Rule is only surpassed by their hatred of the Protestant and British minority in Ulster. Their interest in temperance is conditional upon their being able to ruin the publicans. Their advocacy of compensation to workmen is tempered by their desire to do some injury to the employer. Even their love, their affection for the Parish Councils Bill is conditional upon their hostility to the Church.' In this travesty of their aims the Liberals saw proof of pique. Their answer to their censor was given in the biting words of Sir William Harcourt: 'Don't let him pretend that the creed of the Radical party has changed, as an apology for his desertion of the cause of which he once proclaimed himself the self-elected leader.'

At the end of 1893 only one of the long list of measures promised by Mr. Gladstone's Government had become law: it was a bill relating to the hours of railway servants. As Mr. Chamberlain said, the Ministers had been engaged in the toil:

Of dropping buckets into empty wells
And growing old in drawing nothing up.

This process, although unproductive, was very arduous. The autumn recess was abnormally brief and there was an adjournment of only a few days at Christmas. Beaten by the Lords on Home Rule the Government turned to the Employers' Liability Bill and the Parish Councils Bill. The former, in the opinion of Mr. Chamberlain, was intended to make the workmen more careful by punishing his employer, and he encouraged the Peers to insist on a contracting-out clause which led to its abandonment. Even on the Parish Councils Bill he did not refrain from criticism. He accused the Liberals of putting the Councils into leading strings. 'I know now,' he said, 'why it is that some of my honourable friends are unwilling any longer to extend to me the title of Radical: it appears that modern Radicalism consists of an endeavour to compel somebody or other to do something they don't want to do.' His acrimony drew another strong personal protest from Sir William Harcourt, and relations

between parties were strained as they had not been, even in 1886. At last the long-drawn-out session, which with brief intervals had continued from the beginning of 1893, closed on March 5, 1894, two days after Mr. Gladstone's resignation, and the new session began a week later with Lord Rosebery in the place in the Government which—if there had been no Home Rule disruption—Mr. Chamberlain might have occupied.

The new Prime Ministership did not modify his opposition. From his corner seat below the gangway on the Liberal side, amid the cheers of the Conservatives, he continued to flout the Ministers and all their works; and now that Mr. Gladstone was gone, he became even more contemptuous than before. Obstacles were placed by him in the way of reforms with which his own name had been conspicuously associated. A bill was again introduced to reduce the period of qualification for voting, to remove the disqualification of non-payment of rates, and to check plural voting. What measure could be more congenial to the author of the unauthorized programme? Now, however, his ideas and aims were different. He had spoken in favour of manhood suffrage, and in 1885, while advocating the principle of one man one vote, he had said, 'If we are to make a distinction, I am not quite certain whether it is not the poor man who ought to have more votes than the rich one.' Now he complained of the proposed abolition of the ratepaying condition, and asked: 'Is manhood without any condition of any kind to be the one qualification?' 'Yes,' said a plain north-country Radical. 'Is my honourable friend,' retorted Mr. Chamberlain amid the cheers of his allies, 'in favour of placing the pauper on the register?' He complained, moreover, that plural voting had been brought neck and crop into a bill with which it had no legitimate connexion. In 1885, as Mr. Morley reminded the House, he had treated the abolition of plural voting as urgent, but in 1894 he held it was perfectly ridiculous and unfair of the Liberals to attempt to deal with an acknowledged anomaly of this kind, when it suited their purpose, and to refuse to deal with a still greater anomaly (the inequitable distribution of seats) because it did not suit their purpose. This was the Conservative attitude and Mr. Chamberlain strictly conformed to it when still another attempt was made to legislate on the subject. A speech in which he had attacked the plural representation of property having been quoted, he pleaded that it was 'delivered a very considerable time ago,' and he warned members that they would make a very serious constitutional change if they took plural votes from men who had substantial local interests and qualifications in more than one constituency.

Sir William Harcourt's budget greatly increasing the death duties

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on a graduated scale applied another test to his consistency. In this matter it stood the test. The old Radical still held that the principle of graduation was right, and although he contended that the principle was not properly carried out in the Government scheme he left obstruction to the back benches. On the other hand he resisted the unfortunate Local Veto Bill, and took pleasure in opposing Sir George Trevelyan's project for a Grand Committee to deal with Scottish measures. To no man in the House did he show greater animosity than to Macaulay's nephew and biographer. They had been closely associated in the early stages of the Home Rule movement, and had together withdrawn from Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1886, but when Sir George repented and returned to the Liberal fold, he was ridiculed by his former friend as the most perfect specimen of the political weathercock. Mr. Chamberlain poured abuse on his scheme of a Scottish Committee. 'We are told it is not Home Rule. No, it is not a proposal for Home Rule; but it leads directly to Home Rule: it is a preparation for Home Rule.' For that reason it was deounced by one who was 'a Home Ruler long before Mr. Gladstone.'

Lively controversies took place between the Liberal Unionist leader and the Nationalists in 1894 on the Evicted Tenants Bill. Although Mr. Healy contended that as compared with the Arrears Act of 1882, which followed the No Rent manifesto, and for which Mr. Chamberlain was partly responsible, this measure for the reinstatement of evicted tenants sank into absolute insignificance, he opposed it on the ground that it would encourage resistance to the law. When he called attention to the fact that Mr. William O'Brien had ominously threatened them with public opinion in Ireland, he was reminded of the public opinion that was brought to bear upon Radical tradesmen in England by Primrose dames, and upon certain Wesleyans by Churchmen at Hatfield. Mr. Chamberlain's retort was of the scathing sort which incited party passion. 'When did Primrose dames, or when did any one at Hatfield, mutilate cattle? When did the Primrose dames fire into houses? When did they bring the tenants of a cottage out, and set them up against the walls of their own cottage, and shoot them to their death under the cowardly instigation of their advisers?' The Evicted Tenants Bill shared the fate of other Liberal measures; it was thrown out by the House of Lords.

The session of 1894 was Sir William Harcourt's session. Except for the Scottish Local Government Bill, the only important legislation was the bill embodying the new death duties. These gave their author a new reputation and proved him to be firm in Radical principles and bold in statesmanship. Even his opponents began to credit

him with conviction. Mr. Chamberlain said that Sir William, like a statesman of a previous age, was—

Prompt to supply whate'er his country lacks ;
Skilful to gag, and knowing how to tax.

The author of the unauthorized programme must have envied his achievement.

PUBLICAN, PARSON AND PEER

AMONG our members you will find,' Mr. Chamberlain said, 'the most versatile actors of the day.' He himself displayed genius in versatility. His changes of attitude and tone were so rapid and thorough during the existence of the Liberal Government that even those who knew him best were bewildered. When he dealt with the drink question, with disestablishment and with the House of Lords his former friends were specially amazed for they saw in their old monitor's new declarations on these subjects a sad falling away from his former faith. If he did not abandon his principles he limited their application. Either the circumstances had changed or the method of the Government was wrong, or the time was inopportune for doing what he himself had advocated. He examined everything in its relation to Home Rule and the promoters of Home Rule. To prevent that project from being carried, and to replace its advocates by other men, were his supreme objects.

When the Local Veto Bill was introduced in 1893, Mr. Chamberlain's early admirers hoped that he would support it. His record on the subject was recalled. Mr. Samuel Smith, referring to temperance controversies in the early seventies, wrote in his autobiography: 'I remember at one of these meetings a then very youthful-looking man who took a strong line for Local Option. He was reputed to have convinced the Town Council of Birmingham, and to be the rising Hector of the Temperance and Radical party. This was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain.' At a public conference in Birmingham, in September, 1871, he said he was not in favour of absolute prohibition, but he could go a long way with the United Kingdom Alliance, and as far as he understood its aim, would throw in his lot with it. He became a member of the Alliance and a subscriber to its funds. The Gothenburg system was subsequently espoused by Mr. Chamberlain with characteristic enthusiasm. He advocated the plan before the Liberal 'Six Hundred' at Birmingham in November, 1876; he carried a resolution in favour of it at a Town Council meeting early in 1877; and in his first important speech in the House of Commons at the same period he moved a resolution empowering municipalities to acquire, on

payment of fair compensation, the existing interests in the retail sale of intoxicating drinks, and to carry on the trade in such a way that no profit should accrue to any private individual. Moral suasion and extended education were as much recommended then as they are now by temperance reformers who are opposed to temperance legislation, but in those days, as noted in an earlier chapter, Mr. Chamberlain pointed out that moral suasion had been practised for more than thirty years, and had never reduced the returns nor diminished the gains of a single person engaged in the trade, and he expressed the fear that the evidence would not warrant them in believing that any better results would follow the progress of education than had followed the exercise of moral suasion.

Local control had a place in the unauthorized Liberal programme. Lord Salisbury's objections to such a scheme were ridiculed by the Radical. The Conservative leader, in 1885, was willing to have local option with reference to Sunday closing, but for the non-thirsty souls to say that the thirsty souls should have nothing at all to drink during the week seemed to him to trench upon the elementary liberties of mankind. At that time Mr. Chamberlain did not think so. He described Lord Salisbury as shivering on the brink and afraid to take the plunge, proposing local option for Sunday and compulsory drinking for the rest of the week. His own view he expressed (on October 14, 1885) in an emphatic sentence. 'We trust the people, and we trust them wholly, and we are willing that the whole of this great question should be left absolutely to the representative authorities which will be elected throughout the country.' An equitable claim to compensation on the part of the publicans was recognized by Mr. Chamberlain throughout his parliamentary career. He admitted it in the discussion on the licensing clauses of the County Councils Bill of 1888, but in recommending these clauses to Sir Wilfrid Lawson and his temperance friends he noted that the principle of local option would thereby be accepted, and practically applied. 'There is no doubt,' he said, 'in my mind that under this bill the majority of the inhabitants of any licensing district who will elect representatives to the County Councils, will have the power to do away with every licence in the district if they think fit.' This power he was then prepared to grant. As late as 1892 he expressed the belief that every Unionist, or almost every Unionist, was perfectly willing to vote for the local veto—that is to say, the right of any district to decide for itself whether it will have public-houses in its midst or not, provided that if it were decided to shut up public-houses the men who had been engaged in carrying them on should be properly compensated. This principle he supported on several occasions in the division lobby.

Nevertheless, to the bill which Sir William Harcourt introduced

in 1893, giving the option of prohibition,¹ Mr. Chamberlain offered very strong objection. He did not take his stand merely on compensation. His opposition went to the principle of the measure. 'I made,' he said, 'some inquiries when I was in Canada and the United States, and in both those countries where legislation of this kind has been attempted on a large scale, the testimony of all impartial persons is universal that it has only led to the grossest evasion, and also to what is very much to be regretted—a large increase in private drinking.' Next year at Birmingham, Mr. Chamberlain renewed his objection to the bill, which had been returned meanwhile to the pigeon-holes of a department in Whitehall. 'It is not,' he declared, 'in the true sense a bill for local option : it is a bill for restricting local option. The community would only have the power of deciding one question—whether there should be no public-houses, or all that exist at present !'

On this point Sir William Harcourt met his critic, in the revised measure of 1895, by adding to the option of prohibition the option of reducing the number of public-houses.² Mr. Chamberlain's opposition thereupon took a wider sweep. He denounced the project as class legislation in its worst form. 'If you want to stop drinking—if you think it impossible, which I do not, to stop drunkenness without stopping drinking—then be consistent : take the rich as well as the poor. If you want to stop drinking, have the courage of your opinions and make drinking a penal offence ; or if you won't do that, at all events make laws against the sale and against the manufacture of liquor under all circumstances. But that is not what the bill proposes to do. What it proposes is to interfere with public-houses which are the convenience and the meeting-place of the working classes, and to leave untouched the private cellars, the clubs, and even the railway stations which are frequented by the well-to-do.' The defence of public-houses as the convenience of the working classes startled some of Mr. Chamberlain's friends, and they sorrowfully recalled his former sentiments while he denounced the bill because it took away the property of men who were 'for the most part just as respectable as any other tradesmen.' There was a vast difference between the tone of the speech in 1895 and the spirit of the article in 1876 on 'The Right Method with the Publicans.' The horrors of 'the devil's chain' were no longer emphasized, and the reformer felt pleasure instead of regret at Sir William Harcourt's inability to proceed with his project.

¹ The bill provided, in short, that by a majority of two-thirds of the persons voting in a poll, all licences in an area might be prohibited for three years.

² A resolution for reduction might be carried by a simple majority of the electors, instead of the two-thirds majority required for the veto, and when it was adopted the licences were to be reduced by one-fourth of their number.

II

Separation of Church and State was the principle to which, above all others, Mr. Chamberlain was committed, and, in view of his attitude towards the bill for disestablishment in Wales, his record is worthy of study. His most eloquent speeches, expressing the deepest earnestness, were on this subject. He had spoken as one who was proud to share the convictions and aspirations of Nonconformists.

Mine is a family of political Dissenters.—(1874.)

I am an English Nonconformist, born and bred in dissent. . . . For political as well as for social reasons, and in the interest of religion itself, I am a Liberationist.—(September 15, 1885.)

All my public life I have been a Liberationist.—(October 30, 1891.)

In one of the earliest declarations from his pen which received a national circulation,¹ Mr. Chamberlain attacked the Established Church. He accused it of being always opposed to popular reforms, and said its interests were bound up with those of wealth and power and vested rights. In October, 1874, after Mr. Gladstone had 'commissioned his son' to say at Whitby that the page of Liberal history devoted to disestablishment would not bear his name, Mr. Chamberlain warned him to reconsider a decision which might place him at no distant date in opposition to the will of a clear majority of the nation. Again, in his first speech to his constituents, he took political ground as a Liberationist. 'The fact is,' he said, 'that union between Church and State is separation between Church and people. . . . One reason why working men do not go to church may be sought for in the fact that workmen are compelled to look upon it as their opponent in all the political reforms upon which they have set their hearts.' In 1877 he went up and down the country preaching disestablishment. At a meeting of the Leeds Nonconformist Union, he declared that the ecclesiastical establishment was the greatest obstacle to political, social and intellectual progress; and at Bristol, addressing a meeting in connexion with the Liberation Society, he urged that the Church should be disestablished and disendowed, and asked what were the Liberal party waiting for? At Bradford, also, in the same year, he spoke most eloquently for the Society. Among his other early declarations were the following—

The Church still remains a monument of religious inequality, established and endowed by law.—(Rochdale, November 7, 1877.)

The Church by law established is a piece of political carpentry. The nation has made it, and the nation can unmake it.—(West Bromwich, November 19, 1877.)

Office and experience did not soften Mr. Chamberlain's feelings. At Denbigh, on October 20, 1884, he made the announcement, which

¹ *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1873.

was never forgotten by friend or foe : ' I have no spite against the House of Lords, but as a Dissenter I have an account to settle with them, and I promise you I will not forget the reckoning.' At Glasgow, on September 15, 1885, he pronounced in impressive language against anything in the nature of State interference with, or State aid to, religion. He would free the Church from State control, whether in England, in Scotland, or in Wales, and he added the expression of his belief that the appropriation to the service of a single sect of funds which were originally designed for the benefit of the whole nation was an injustice.

An entry in Archbishop Benson's diary,¹ with reference to disestablishment, shows the alarm and the anger excited at that period by the utterances of the Radical leader. ' Chamberlain,' writes the Archbishop, ' without any circumlocution, spoke of it as his desire, and as very near, though not perhaps within the next session. Then came out *The Radical Programme* preface by Chamberlain, with a truculent, wolfish imagining the whole thing down to details, and claiming it.' He intended, according to his own confession, to have given disestablishment the first place in the unauthorized programme, but strong pressure against this procedure was brought to bear upon him, and in the election campaign at the end of 1885 he allowed the question to lie over. He intimated then at Leicester that for the sake of unity the extreme Liberals had put aside their most cherished principles—disestablishment, for instance ; but after the split in the party he assured a Welsh correspondent that his views on its justice and expediency were exactly the same then as they had always been.

During the Parliament of 1886–92, even when supporting the Conservative Government, he resumed his advocacy of disestablishment, and presented it as a rival to Home Rule. At Birmingham in September, 1887, speaking for the extreme section of the Liberal party, he included religious equality among subjects which were much riper than the Irish question, and which ' ought not to be put aside.' Two years later, in laying the memorial-stone of the Methodist New Connexion School in Birmingham, he paid an eloquent tribute to Dissent and the great part it had played in the history of this country. In February, 1891, he voted for a motion in favour of disestablishment in Wales, and in the course of that year he addressed several remarkable appeals to the Welsh people, warning them that every Dissenter who voted for a Gladstonian was voting for the indefinite postponement of the cause in which they were so much interested. Just as he boasted at Dingwall in 1887 that he was a Home Ruler long before Mr. Gladstone, he boasted in South Wales on October 30, 1891, that he had voted for disestablishment in the Principality long before Mr.

¹ *Edward White Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury*, by A. C. Benson.

Gladstone discovered that it was a popular cry there, he had voted for disestablishment in Scotland before Mr. Gladstone was aware that the majority of the Scottish people desired it, and he had voted for disestablishment in England although only a minority of the people wished to see it accomplished. Careless of whether he was in a minority or a majority, he would follow his convictions as long as he lived, but 'I tell you, my fellow-Nonconformists and fellow-Liberationists, that by the introduction of Home Rule the question of religious equality has been indefinitely postponed.' The same electioneering argument was put concisely in the letter quoted in a previous chapter in which Mr. Chamberlain expressed the conviction that the only chance for the speedy satisfaction of the legitimate claims of Welsh Nonconformity was to be found in the defeat of Home Rule.

Probably the Conservative Churchmen became alarmed then as the Archbishop was six years earlier by the line their ally was taking. He again, however, changed his tone as the General Election of 1892 drew near. On his appointment as leader of the Liberal Unionists at the beginning of that year, he stated, as we have seen, that while retaining his freedom to put forward his views on disestablishment when he thought right to do so, he was willing to subordinate them to the interests of the Union; and in the month of March, addressing the Nonconformist Unionist Association in London, he made the following notable announcement: 'I do not think that you will find anywhere a more ardent or a more consistent supporter of disestablishment than myself. But it is neither defensible in principle nor in policy to put this question forward to the exclusion of every other. It is not right to do evil in order that good may come. It is not right to purchase the disestablishment of the Church at the price of the disintegration of the empire.' After complaining for years that this cause was kept in the background he complained now that it was put in the foreground.

Thus we have obtained Mr. Chamberlain's record on a subject which touched his deepest convictions. At the outset of his career, in 1874, he was prepared to dispense with Mr. Gladstone's leadership rather than have disestablishment delayed; in 1885 he desired to give it the first place in his programme but was withheld by Mr. Gladstone; after the disruption of the Liberal party he contended that it was riper for settlement than Home Rule; in 1891 an argument used by him against the Gladstonian policy was that it meant the indefinite postponement of Welsh disestablishment; but on the eve of the election of 1892 he objected to an alleged attempt 'to purchase the disestablishment of the Church at the price of the disintegration of the empire.' The statement that the Nonconformists supported Home Rule in order to get disestablishment was stigmatized

by the *British Weekly*, which spoke with authority on the subject, as the most outrageous of calumnies. 'They were perfectly aware that by supporting Home Rule they were postponing disestablishment, but such was their devotion to Mr. Gladstone primarily, and such also, no doubt, their conviction that Home Rule was just, that they were content to put aside personal ends and aims.'

We come now to Mr. Chamberlain's action on this matter in the Parliament of 1892-5 during the Administration of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery. It was curiously chequered action, springing on the one hand from his life-long convictions as a Dissenter, and on the other from his determination to thwart the Liberal Government. Mr. Chamberlain disapproved of their tactics in 1893 in promoting the Welsh Suspensory Bill, which provided that thereafter, in the case of appointments by the Crown to livings in the Principality, the emoluments should be held subject to the pleasure of Parliament. By this measure, he said, they would hamper the Church without the possibility of dealing finally with the subject for at any rate a considerable period. In his opinion it was merely a sop to the Welsh members to keep them quiet while the Home Rule Bill was under consideration. The measure was not proceeded with; and next year a bill to disestablish the Church in Wales was dropped for want of time but it was again introduced in 1895.

Meantime Mr. Chamberlain used a qualifying phrase. He wrote and spoke of his support of 'the principle' of disestablishment. In March, 1894, at Edinburgh, when insisting that the decision of the Scottish people on this question must be taken in circumstances in which it could not possibly be denied, he referred to 'those who, like myself, are in favour, as a *principle*, of disestablishment.' Later, this became a *matter of abstract principle*. Mr. Chamberlain pained some of his friends and did injustice to his undoubted convictions when, at Heywood, in November, 1894, he said: 'You may, if you like, try to disestablish and disendow the Church in Wales, and if you succeed, in my opinion—although I sympathize with the object as a matter of abstract principle—nobody will be one penny the better for it.' Mr. Morley, much grieved, retorted in sadness that 'human manhood has something apart from the penny.' On any one who respects Mr. Chamberlain's integrity of mind the Heywood phrase jars more than anything else in his career.

The conflict of motives in his mind was again shown by the letter dated January 31, 1895, which he addressed to the editor of the *Aberystwith Observer*. 'Disestablishment in Wales must come,' he wrote, 'and the only question is whether it shall be accompanied by the just treatment of the Church in regard to its funds. This can be secured now by the Unionist party, and Churchmen would be wise

if they were to urge their leaders to devote themselves to this part of the subject.' Churchmen did not feel constrained to accept the advice. At the opening of the session of 1895, when Mr. Chamberlain brought forward a motion demanding a dissolution it was pointed out that this would shelve the Welsh Disestablishment Bill. Mr. Asquith wanted to know what had happened to the 'cup'—(the cup of the Dissenters' wrath against the peers)—which was nearly full when he spoke at Denbigh, in 1884, and Sir William Harcourt taunted him with having assured the people of the Principality that if Home Rule were only out of the way they would have disestablishment at once. He angrily denied that he had said anything of the kind. 'What I did say was that since Home Rule was introduced the prospect of disestablishment in Wales had been delayed.' At the second reading of the Disestablishment Bill in April, Mr. Chamberlain, claiming the liberty of action which, as he said, had been recognized by the leaders of the Conservative Party,¹ voted in its favour. Only one other Liberal Unionist followed the same independent course. The defeat of Lord Rosebery's Administration in June put an end to the measure, and the Coalition Government was formed with very different aims from those of the Liberationists.

Looking ahead nine years, we find Mr. Chamberlain telegraphing in 1904 to the *Western Mail*: 'I have always been in favour of disestablishment as a theory although not a practical policy.' What was urgent in 1874, and an abstract principle in 1894, had, like his Republicanism of early years, fallen to a theory. To the theory at any rate he remained steadfast. In the session of 1904, on the Bishopsrics of Southwark and Birmingham Bill, he frankly said:—

I am not only a Nonconformist, but am, and always have been, in favour of the policy of disestablishment. I think myself that the adoption of that policy would really be for the relief of the Church of England, would increase its spiritual influence, and save it from the attacks which are now made upon it.

III

No question betrayed the change in Mr. Chamberlain more completely than that raised by the action of the House of Lords. This was the subject on which he had excited the stormiest passions at Radical meetings in 1884 and 1885. On account of their hostility to the Franchise Bill, Mr. Chamberlain pronounced the tragic doom of the Lords, and in his programme he included 'the question of mending or ending the second Chamber.' In the ten years which followed the Liberal disruption, his point of view was completely altered. He

¹ I have always reserved my own liberty of action with regard to this question, and this has been recognized fully by the leaders of the Conservative party—Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour (June, 1894).

predicted in 1892, that the House which he threatened with extinction in 1884, would remain for several generations to come a picturesque and a stately, if not a supremely important part of the British Constitution. Its action in 1893 and 1894, although exciting the indignation of Mr. Gladstone and his friends, commanded the Unionist leader's enthusiastic approval. When he praised the House of Lords for throwing out the Home Rule Bill, he was challenged by a correspondent with inconsistency, but he replied: 'There is no inconsistency in praising either an institution or an individual when it is in the right, and condemning it when it is in the wrong. The House of Lords has often in the past made serious mistakes and incurred just condemnation. It deserves, however, the gratitude of the people of Great Britain for standing up for their rights and preventing them from being overridden by a disloyal Irish faction.'

'What are you going to attack the House of Lords for?' he asked in February, 1894; and he contended that in acting as they did upon the Home Rule Bill, the hereditary peers were representative of the vast majority of the British people. 'This premature cry about the House of Lords is a purely artificial one; it is got up for party purposes.' The destruction or mutilation of other Liberal measures did not disturb the growth of Mr. Chamberlain's mature affection for the hereditary chamber. The peers insisted on adding a fatal proviso to the Employers' Liability Bill, and although they receded from certain restrictions on the Parish Councils Bill, their amendments to it were protested against by the Government. Still Mr. Chamberlain covered them with his shield. He believed, as he said, that they represented the true wishes of the majority. Naturally their subsequent action in throwing out the Evicted Tenants (Ireland) Bill, failed to modify his good opinion. It added, on the contrary, another mark in their favour.

Instead of crying 'Down with the Lords!' Mr. Chamberlain became an advocate of a second chamber. At Leeds, in September, 1894, he said his conviction was that a second chamber of some sort was absolutely necessary in our Constitution. 'I am ready,' he conceded, 'to view with favour any reasonable proposal which would add an elective element to the composition of the House of Lords, which would bring them into closer touch with popular sentiment, which would give them a representative authority such as that which is given to the Senate of the United States.' Thereupon he was caricatured looking at himself in a mirror as he tried on a coronet. Still more remarkable was the reference he made to the subject at Durham, on October 16:—

I am no apologist for the constitution of the House of Lords; I am no defender of hereditary legislation, but I am a strong upholder of a second chamber, and, *until you can find me a better I am going to stick to the House of Lords!*

The peers who had trembled at the agitator's frown and who had feared he might raise a storm which would shake their House to its foundations slumbered peacefully after this decisive declaration. Their most dreaded enemy had become their champion. The feelings of Liberals were expressed by a parody of 'Auld Lang Syne,' signed 'C. G.,' in the *Westminster Gazette*, in which Mr. Asquith reminded Mr. Chamberlain of his former orations:—

We twa hae stumped the countryside,
And slang'd the Tories fine,
But ye've wander'd mony a weary foot
Sin auld lang syne.

We twa hae thunder'd gin the Lords,
From mornin' sun till dine;
But Dukes between us now hae come
Sin auld lang syne.

XXVI

NEW MAN AND NEW IDEALS

NOBODY will be one penny the better for it,' was no mere passing indiscretion of the tongue, although the application of the phrase to disestablishment may have been regretted by its author. The words indicated a new current of ideas in Mr. Chamberlain's brain. No longer was he the preacher of a generous gospel of humanity. Revolt against Gladstonian sentiment, and contact with new comrades, had led to his adoption of commercial ideals. Changes in the Constitution, reform bills, religious equality, the ending or mending of the House of Lords, one man one vote—what did all these things mean? What would it benefit us if we set up this, or took down that? Let there be no more cant about humanity; had we not the empire as a theme for eloquence? This was the tendency of thought in many minds during the reaction from Gladstonianism, and the astute electioneerer, reading the signs of the times, produced a new policy. He who had constructed an unauthorized programme for the Liberals in 1885, devised in the next decade a bold programme for the Conservatives. It was said that there was not another man in English history who in the course of ten years had thus drawn the prospectus of each of the political parties in the State. Mr. Chamberlain's ingenuity was equal to the double performance, and in both cases as he boasted a considerable portion of his prospectus was carried out by the company which he directed.

Old age pensions, which had figured seductively in the election of 1892, continued to play an important part in the programme which was presented as a rival to Liberalism and Home Rule. A Commission appointed by the Government revealed wide diversities of opinion, but Mr. Chamberlain in 1894 spoke with confidence of what a Unionist Minister might do in the way of assisting 'all men—aye! and all women' to make provision against old age. Pensions, he now believed, would do more than anything else to secure the happiness and the contentment of the poorer people. Moreover, his tempting basket included assistance to the working classes in the purchase of their houses, compensation for accidents, tribunals of arbitration, and the statutory limitation of the hours of labour. 'Those,' he said, 'who had followed his career in Parliament would know that he was in favour

of an eight-hours day. He voted for an eight-hours bill for miners, and he was prepared to vote for an eight-hours bill for any trade, the members of which could show that it was legitimate and expedient to have the principle extended to them.'

The new social programme irritated a section of the more timid or honest Tories and they raised an outcry against its author, but when Mr. Chamberlain threatened to resign his leadership if the Unionist party adopted a merely negative attitude his wrath was turned away with smooth words. Lord Salisbury expressed the greatest sympathy with his 'general objects,' and the Duke of Devonshire took occasion to concur in moderate and reasonable social reform. Thus the politician who was neither Whig nor Tory nor new Radical was permitted—if not warmly encouraged—to proceed with his propaganda. In November, 1894, he presented the rival programmes before the country in such a form as to show that material benefits were to be obtained only from the Unionists:—

You may, if you like, try to disestablish the Welsh Church, or you may on the other hand try to become the owners of your own houses. You may attempt to pass an Irish Land Bill, or you may attempt to get old age pensions for yourselves. You may try to put down drinking and to prevent any man from having a glass of beer, or you may try with me to prevent drunkenness and to restrict the vice of drinking. Lastly, you may enter into a campaign against the House of Lords which will last for years, and it may be for generations, or you may enter on a campaign against want and misery, and you may try to add something to the sum of human happiness.

A trivial incident which made Mr. Chamberlain the butt of much laughter occurred early in the session of 1895. Debate had taken place on Indian import duties on cotton manufactures and Mr. Chamberlain at the last moment desired to avoid voting. The outer doors were locked by the time that he made up his mind to abstain, so that he could not proceed in the ordinary manner through the corridors to the library or smoking room. Yet he did not pass the tellers in the division lobbies which surround the House. Where then did he go? Members, with the view of casting ridicule on so provocative an opponent, raised a question of order as to whether being present when the question was finally put he ought not to have recorded his vote.¹ A Nationalist suggested that he had played a game of hide-and-seek. The Speaker's explanation that there were 'means of escape' known to members, produced a volley of laughter at Mr. Chamberlain's expense. The incident showed that everything in which he was concerned was magnified, and that he was not allowed to take the slightest liberty without being brought to account. There is no

¹ A new system has since then been introduced, by which members may remain in the House during a division without voting.

more levelling place than the House of Commons. It is a place of cruelty as well as of chivalry.

As the threads of the life of Lord Rosebery's unhappy Government became more and more slender, and the succession of a new Administration drew perceptibly nearer, attacks on the Liberal Unionists and their leader in the House of Commons were renewed by a section of their allies. Mr. Chamberlain's domestic policy was still distrusted by some of his old opponents; his action in voting for the second reading of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill had annoyed many Churchmen; and moreover in some Conservative quarters there was a natural fear that good posts for which good Tories were admirably fitted might pass from the Carlton Club. Mr. Chamberlain had been of great service to the State in discrediting Liberalism and defeating Home Rule, but now his allies could carry on by themselves in their old manner. The *Spectator* hinted that if these attacks were continued the great electioneerer might be compelled to retire from the political campaign; and a letter published sixteen years later showed in his own words how deeply he resented the conduct of the undisciplined Tories in firing into the backs of their allies. Writing to the Duke of Devonshire on April 19, 1895, he said: 'My rôle in the Home Rule controversy has been to keep a number of strong Liberals and Radicals staunch to the Union. To do this, I have had to give evidence that I remain a Liberal at heart although I am loyally working with the Tories. I can sacrifice a great deal in the way of opinions, but I cannot sacrifice everything without losing all the influence I now possess. If any considerable number of Conservatives believe that they are strong enough to stand alone and can do without the Liberal Unionist crutch. as poor Randolph phrased it, I am ready to be thrown aside and to let them try the experiment. On the other hand, if they still want our assistance they must pay the price they have hitherto willingly paid.'¹

Whatever the Tapers and Tadpoles might think, the Conservative chiefs knew they could not dispense with Mr. Chamberlain's aid. Mr. Balfour, at a Primrose League meeting a week after his communication to the Duke, repudiated the strictures which had caused offence and effusively declared that never had a man received more generous support than had been given to himself by the leader of the Liberal Unionist party in the House of Commons. They had, he said, a record behind them of nine years of the closest political co-operation and the closest personal friendship. A testimonial was received also from Lord Salisbury, who wrote that the Conservatives had always recognized most gratefully 'the disinterestedness and the straightforward loyalty with which Mr. Chamberlain has devoted his great authority

¹ *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, by Bernard Holland.

and his splendid powers to the defence of the Irish Union.' The sensitive ally was thus appeased. So far as he was concerned, he said, on May 22, the incident was closed by the chivalrous speech of Mr. Balfour; and with corresponding magnanimity he testified to the friendliness and loyalty of the Conservative leaders. Proof of the solidarity of the two sections was given by the presence of the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain at the annual meeting of the National Union of Conservative Associations. The Duke suggested the name of Unionist for the combined parties—a name, however, which never swallowed up Conservative—and his colleague remarked that the party thus described might now contemplate co-operation in constructive legislation.

Meanwhile they challenged the right of a Liberal Government to exist. Repeatedly during 1895 Mr. Chamberlain in his anxiety for power demanded an appeal to the country. He taunted the ministers with trying to pass bills which the Lords would throw out, and with clinging to office although they knew that their policy was not approved. 'This is not a proud Government,' he scornfully said, and in the words of Prior he compared it to the condemned criminal who—

Now fitted the halter, now traversed the cart,
And often took leave, but was loth to depart.

Some of its members were notoriously weary of 'ploughing the sand,' There were dissensions in the Cabinet; the chiefs in the two Houses lacked sympathy with one another; and it was whispered that defeat would be regarded by both as a happy release. On June 13 Sir William Harcourt, who although he missed the Prime Ministership, had won the respect of the House of Commons by his leadership, declared emphatically that it was the intention of the Government to proceed at all events with their principal bills until these had passed into law, but eight days later they fell 'on a petty detail of their policy.' In a small House, when important business was unexpected, they were defeated by a majority of seven on an amendment which in effect charged them with neglecting to provide an adequate supply of cordite. The Ministers might have ignored the hasty censure if the Cabinet had been united and the party loyal, but Lord Rosebery abandoned a task in which he was not adequately supported. He resigned on Saturday, June 22.

Lord Salisbury, being at once summoned, saw the Queen on the following Monday, and next day, the 25th, the inner circle of the Coalition Cabinet was formed. Four of its members, besides Mr. Goschen, had formerly been colleagues of Mr. Gladstone, namely, the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain, the Marquis of Lansdowne and Sir Henry James, now created Lord James of Hereford. Mr. Chamberlain

received the office of Secretary of State for the Colonies, which he was supposed to covet in 1886, and several of his lieutenants obtained minor posts. Although he himself declined, as a Radical, nine years previously to preside over one of the great spending and fighting departments, his son began a prosperous career at the Admiralty with 'the skeleton at the feast'; Mr. Jesse Collings, at the age of sixty-four, became an Under-Secretary, and Mr. Powell Williams, another faithful friend, was appointed Financial Secretary to the War Office. Even if Lord Salisbury had been reluctant to introduce into his Government so large a Birmingham tail he could not on the eve of the election have resisted the demands of the statesman on whom much depended.

XXVII

LORD SALISBURY'S COLLEAGUE

WHEN the Unionist Whip moved for the writ for an election in West Birmingham, on the occasion of Mr. Chamberlain's acceptance of office in the Salisbury Government, the Liberals who were haunted by memories laughed mockingly. The coalition of the Radical Nonconformist with the Clerical Conservative, the advocate of ransom with the champion of those 'who toil not neither do they spin,' was as strange as any political combination in our history. In 1883 Lord Salisbury had expressed surprise that Whigs like Lord Granville and Lord Hartington should sit in the same Cabinet with Mr. Chamberlain; and until the arrangement was definitely announced some of the former friends of the old Radical refused to believe that he would serve with his former foes. The more Liberal of the Unionists keenly realized the risk underlying the coalition. 'A great experiment!' exclaimed one who was subsequently separated from Mr. Chamberlain. There were at the same time certain Conservatives who feared that his early views might still taint his Unionism, and their doubts were played upon by his early associates who recalled the warning given to Othello with reference to Desdemona: 'She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee.'

For the first time, in July, 1895, the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives sat on the same side of the House of Commons. While the inheritors of Mr. Gladstone's policy crossed to the left of the chair, the Conservatives came over to the benches on the right, and their allies who had been sitting there among the Liberals for the three previous years, remained as part of the new Ministerial force. Thus the physical severance of Liberal Unionists from Gladstonians took place at last. The rift of 1886 had gradually widened, and now the two sections confronted one another as open, formal, regular opponents. Mr. Chamberlain on his re-election was introduced by his son and one of the Government Whips to a House in which he was exceedingly familiar. He placed himself beside Mr. Balfour on the Treasury bench, where formerly he sat as the companion of Gladstone and Bright. With mingled scorn and amusement Radicals and Nationalists watched their enemy, and when he whispered to Mr. Balfour as the latter was making a statement on the course of business, they affected to see in

his interference a proof of pushfulness. 'He's at it already,' one of them cried. They suspected that he was about to 'shape his old course in a country new.'

The bitterness of the Liberal leaders was poured out on Mr. Chamberlain and his colleagues in unstinted measure. Lord Rosebery sarcastically congratulated him on having at last attained the object of his later ambition in being at the head of a united Tory Government. 'The cremation of Liberal Unionism,' said Sir William Harcourt, 'has been at last performed in the Tory crematory. Peace to their ashes. There is one imposture the less in the world.' Mr. Morley shook his head and sighed at the irrecoverable loss of the old Radical:—

There is, he wistfully remarked, one change that I shall make in my little library. I have two little red volumes. One is called *The Radical Programme*, with a preface by Mr. Chamberlain; and the other is *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*. I promise you that I shall put these two volumes into the top shelves of my library, and I do not think that I shall consult them again.

With a simple policy of dissolution Lord Salisbury took office, and the general election followed at once. Mr. Chamberlain threw himself into it with a vigour which even he had not surpassed, and which inspired others. He pushed his own programme. 'Do you want,' he asked Birmingham, 'to have social legislation, or do you desire, on the contrary, once more to continue in a course of revolutionary, destructive reforms in our Constitution and in our great institutions?' There was now no bolder champion of the Tories. 'Give to the Conservatives in common fairness what is undoubtedly their due—the right to claim that they were the first to take an interest in questions affecting the material happiness and domestic lives of the people of this country.' Strange testimony from the man who had asked when the time would be opportune in the minds of the Tory party for a measure of reform, and who had declared that the Tories would make no concession to just demands until they were preferred in a tone and temper which showed that the people would not be trifled with! What the masses wanted, or what they ought to want, was indicated by Lord Salisbury's strange colleague with the utmost precision and confidence. 'They want, in my opinion, legislation which will increase employment, which will help to sustain and even increase wages. They want legislation which will make the homes of the working people healthier, which will make the working people owners of their own homes. They want legislation which will help to smooth the declining years of the poor, and to relieve them from what is now almost a nightmare;¹ they want legislation to protect

¹ On the subject of old age pensions, Mr. Chamberlain said at Hanley on July 12, 1895: 'My proposal broadly is so simple that any one can understand

those whom I have called the wounded soldiers of industry, the men who, in the ordinary course of duty and employment, suffer from accident and injury.'

The election was won for the Conservatives by their ally. His personality and his programme predominated and prevailed. The Liberals with a divided policy and a divided leadership, suffered a disastrous rout. Sir William Harcourt was defeated at Derby, and Mr. Morley was driven from Newcastle. The Unionists gained ninety seats, and opened the new Parliament with an irresistible majority of 152. In the Midlands Mr. Chamberlain waxed greater than ever. Before the election thirty-four constituencies in the four counties of which Birmingham is the capital, were represented by Unionists, and ten by Gladstonian Liberals; after the election the proportions were thirty-eight and six respectively. Many explanations and excuses were proffered by the vanquished. They had suffered from the loss of their great chief and from the dissensions of his successors; some blamed the Local Veto Bill, others lamented the absence of social legislation. According to the victors, the result of the election was a decision against Home Rule.

In a personal aspect, the new Parliament which opened on August 12, 1895, was specially melancholy. No longer did the roll of members include the name of William Ewart Gladstone. Although he resigned office in March, 1894, he had retained his seat till the dissolution; Parliamentarians had continued to glory in their matchless colleague, and there had always been the possibility that the dauntless veteran might return to deliver one more splendid speech. Now no constituency could boast of Mr. Gladstone as its representative, and the House of Commons knew that never again would his living face flash upon it. After his departure the most potent figures were those of Mr. Chamberlain and Sir William Harcourt. In his late years Sir William's character mellowed and softened; and after he imitated Lord Rosebery and threw down the leadership of a distracted and rebellious party, it became the fashion of members to describe him as the greatest ornament of their assembly. Mr. Chamberlain, the most powerful debater, the most brilliant electioneerer, the most intrepid and ambitious schemer, looked forward to a long official life, full of measures of reform, which Liberals ought to have undertaken but could not pass, and which would add to his own renown. Mr. Balfour, the Tory leader of the House, was spared by the Opposition in order that attack might be concentrated on his Liberal Unionist colleague and even this process increased the notoriety and the importance of the man

it. I suggest that whenever a man has acquired for himself in a friendly society or any other society, a pension of 2s. 6d. per week, the State should come in and double that pension.'

of Birmingham. When he said he would die a Radical he did not think he would live to sit on the same bench as Conservative ministers, but he seemed thoroughly contented in their company. There were rumours in the summer of 1896 that Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Goschen and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach were competitors for the deputy-leadership, but Sir Michael, alluding to these stories at a dinner, said that 'no three members of the Cabinet were on more friendly terms.' Time, and the whirl of events, had thrust far back in the old Radical's memory the sharp controversies which he had carried on so vivaciously with Whigs and Tories.

In the Colonial Secretaryship he found a congenial post. Several of his predecessors treated it as one of the easiest offices in the Administration, and at first there was an impression that he had desired it because its duties would leave him with time and opportunity for developing the social policy of the Government and promoting the legislation of domestic departments. He had, however, shown a steady flight towards imperialism. We have seen that in his revolt against the Home Rule of Mr. Gladstone his outlook soared far beyond Great Britain, and in succeeding years he scorned the fear which he formerly shared with other Radicals of obligations and responsibilities. His new views had been expressed with his customary directness in St. James's Hall, a few weeks before he took office in a Unionist Government. 'We believe,' he said 'in the expansion of the empire : in its legitimate development. We are not afraid to take upon ourselves the burden and the responsibility which attach to a great governing race.' It may be assumed that ambitious schemes, imperial as well as social, passed through his busy mind in the recess of 1895 while the Cabinet was preparing the work of the new Parliament. 'I hope we shall have a period of calm and peace,' Mr. Balfour said, but knowing his colleague that hope may not have been sanguine.

XXVIII

TRANSVAAL RAID AND INQUIRY

THE history of Mr. Chamberlain's career at the Colonial Office is mainly the history of the last struggle for the Transvaal. Other events distinguished the term of his Secretaryship, notably a growth in the feeling of kinship between the over-sea dominions and the mother country, the expansion of our West African territories, and the foundation of the Commonwealth of Australia; but the affair with which he was most memorably associated, producing as it did the greatest consequences in our time, was the conflict in South Africa. No feature of his public life led to sharper diversity of opinion. His share of the transactions which added two colonies to the empire raised him for a time to the highest pinnacle of notoriety and popularity but for no part of his work did he receive in after years less gratitude or more obloquy.

Just six months after the social reformer took office with the hope of dishing the Liberals by domestic legislation a dark shadow fell across his path. Christmas in 1895 was spent by the Colonial Secretary at Birmingham, but by the midnight train on December 30 he hurried to London. Anxious thoughts and troubled dreams attended him on that cold, cheerless journey, for he had received a telegram that Dr. Jameson, a high agent of the Chartered South Africa Company had, with five or six hundred armed men, entered the Transvaal. Mr. Rhodes, the Prime Minister of Cape Colony, who was managing director of the Company, had placed that force on its territory, ready to go, if necessary, to the assistance of Reformers in Johannesburg, who were demanding from the Boers a share of political power. Dr. Jameson 'went in' on his own authority, but Mr. Rhodes took responsibility for his action and sent for publication in *The Times* an appeal for help, signed by leading inhabitants of Johannesburg, which had been drawn up in anticipation of an armed incursion. The last day of 1895 was spent by Mr. Chamberlain at the Colonial Office, from ten o'clock in the morning till half-past seven in the evening, and the New Year opened with intense excitement throughout the country and the empire. One amazing piece of news rapidly followed another. It was announced, in turn, that the Raid into the Transvaal had taken place, that Mr. Chamberlain had telegraphed peremptory instructions to the High

Commissioner at the Cape to stop Jameson and turn him back ; that Jameson had disregarded the instructions ; finally, that he had been surrounded by the Boers at Krugersdorp and had surrendered. In the intervals between the scenes in this rapid drama people had scarcely time to reflect on what was passing.

Qualities of 'statesmanlike courage, promptitude and decision' were, according to Sir William Harcourt and other Radicals, displayed by the Colonial Secretary. Mr. Fairfield, one of the permanent officials of his department, who had been put upon the scent of the Raid by a suggestion in a financial newspaper that Jameson might take the bit between his teeth, had written to him at Birmingham saying that such a suggestion had been made, and asking whether it would not be well to issue a warning. This led to Mr. Chamberlain sending a confidential telegram on December 29 to the High Commissioner, to the effect that it had been suggested, although he did not think it probable, that an endeavour might be made to force matters at Johannesburg by some one connected with the South Africa Company advancing with a force from Bechuanaland, and requesting him to warn Mr. Rhodes, if necessary, that should this be done the Government would take action under the Charter. On hearing next day that the frontier had been crossed, Mr. Chamberlain hastened from Birmingham to Whitehall and acted with energy and resolution. His conduct in trying to stop Jameson was disapproved of only by his new friends, the Jingoës. Dr. 'Jim' was their hero ; his praises were shouted in music-halls ; for a few delirious hours it was believed he would succeed ; and deep was the chagrin when the news of his surrender was announced.

The popularity of Mr. Chamberlain among the aggressive imperialists was revived by his spirited protest against foreign interference. The German Emperor sent a telegram to Mr. Kruger, the President of the Transvaal Republic, congratulating him on the fact that 'without appealing for the help of friendly Powers' he had succeeded against armed bands which invaded his country. This message, with the suggestion that 'friendly Powers' might have intervened if called upon, aroused the sensitive temper of the British people, and the Colonial Secretary made himself the national mouthpiece by declaring that we would resist at all costs the interference of any foreign country in the affairs of the Republic. In order to be prepared for every emergency the Government commissioned a flying squadron, but fortunately its services were not required. When Mr. Chamberlain returned to Birmingham at the close of the first busy fortnight of 1896, he was cheered enthusiastically by admiring crowds. He was the strong man who, while disapproving of armed raids, had thwarted the designs of an ambitious emperor, and who would see that British interests were protected.

Redress of the grievances of the Uitlanders in the Transvaal was

promptly insisted upon by the Colonial Secretary. Even in repudiating the irregular action of Dr. Jameson he made it the starting point for new official efforts, while the military authorities at the same time were urging the formation of a garrison in Northern Natal which 'would always enable us, in case of need, to take up a strong forward position.' Mr. Chamberlain showed in a speech at Birmingham how there was just cause for discontent in the Transvaal. 'The majority of the population pay nine-tenths of the taxation and have no share whatever in the government of the country. That is an anomaly which does not exist in any other civilised community, and it is an anomaly which wise and prudent statesmanship would remove. I believe that it can be removed without danger to the independence of the Republic, and I believe that until it is removed you will have no permanent guarantee against future internal disturbances. This is the problem which is before President Kruger, and which has for England, as the paramount power in South Africa, the deepest possible interest.' With the view to an amicable settlement the Colonial Secretary invited the Boer leader, if it suited his convenience and if he were agreeable, to come to this country for a personal conference. Two of Mr. Kruger's personal friends had given a positive assurance that he desired such an invitation and would accept it.

At the opening of Parliament Mr. Chamberlain was applauded by a crowd outside Palace Yard as large as ever waited to honour Mr. Gladstone, and when he entered the House he was greeted cordially by both sides. Radicals cheered because he tried to stop Jameson and had repudiated the Raid; Jingoists cheered because he had defied the Kaiser and espoused the cause of Johannesburg. His warning to the Transvaal in an early debate was even more significant than at Birmingham. 'We are entitled,' he claimed, 'to give President Kruger friendly counsel, to warn him of the consequences of a recalcitrant attitude of opposition to every kind of reform.' A suggestion of Home Rule for the Rand led to some genial banter from Sir William Harcourt on the Colonial Secretary's 'early and best manner,' and when his former colleague jocularly wished him a fortunate issue to the Round Table Conference with Mr. Kruger, he bowed with an ironical gesture. The whole country watched with keen interest, and perhaps with less gravity than the issues demanded, the encounter between the astutest politician in England and the 'slim' President of the Transvaal. They were well matched.

Reliance was placed on Mr. Kruger's prudence in the hour of his victory. Policy, if not generosity, induced him to hand over the leaders of the Raid to Great Britain for trial; and in due course of law they were convicted at the High Court of infringements of the Foreign Enlistments Act. They were sentenced to terms of imprisonment

varying from fifteen months in Dr. Jameson's case to five in the case of the least responsible officers. Jameson was, however, released within six months on account of ill-health. Meanwhile, the leaders of the 'Reform' or Revolutionary Committee of Johannesburg were tried at Pretoria, and four of them were sentenced to death, but the capital sentence was commuted. Those who then petitioned were set free, the others being liberated at Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

A new sort of diplomacy was introduced by Mr. Chamberlain in communicating to the world everything that was occurring, 'not week by week but moment by moment.' The earliest complaint of this system related to a dispatch submitting suggestions for the consideration of the Transvaal Government, which he published before it could have reached Pretoria. While Jingoed at home and Uitlanders in Johannesburg were satisfied with what Mr. Dillon described as the 'superb arrogance of the dispatch,' Radicals were of opinion that its premature publication may have prejudiced Mr. Kruger's view of the invitation which had been addressed to him, although no doubt other influences were at work to prevent him from coming to England. It was found impossible to arrange a basis of negotiation. Mr. Kruger not only refused to discuss grievances which Mr. Chamberlain desired to remove but claimed the right to reopen consideration of the article of the London Convention referring to British suzerainty which Her Majesty's Government would not discuss. In the circumstances the country learned with amusement rather than with surprise that it would be wiser not to press the invitation, and three months after it had been sent it was withdrawn.

The necessity of reform continued, however, to be pressed upon Mr. Kruger's attention, and as a precautionary measure the Government decided to send out a battalion of the line and a body of mounted infantry to increase the garrison at the Cape—a reinforcement which in the light of subsequent events looked paltry, but which at the time was regarded as significant. Opponents of Mr. Chamberlain asserted that very soon after he went to the Colonial Office, if not at the time of his appointment, he determined even at the cost of war to tighten the British grip on South Africa, but his early speeches did not reveal any provocative intention. On the contrary he urged at the Constitutional Club, on April 22, that 'we should use every exertion, exhaust every means, to secure good feeling between the Dutch and the English,' and in debate on the Colonial Office vote on May 8 he presented the case against war in a vigorous and telling passage, of which he was subsequently reminded scores of times by the peace party—

A war in South Africa would be one of the most serious wars that could possibly be waged. It would be in the nature of a civil war. It would be a long

war, a bitter war and a costly war ; and it would leave behind it embers of a strife which I believe generations would hardly be long enough to extinguish.

Of course, he continued, there might be contingencies in which a great Power had to face even such an alternative as this, ' but to go to war with President Kruger in order to force upon him reforms in the internal affairs of his State—with which successive Secretaries of State had repudiated all right of interference—that would have been a course of action as immoral as it would have been unwise.'

Confidence was felt at this crisis by almost all members of both parties in the strong Minister's attitude. While the Liberals were relieved by his declarations in favour of continued friendly relations with the Transvaal, the advocates of a forward policy were satisfied with his insistence on our position as the paramount Power. Both approved of his emphatic protest against foreign interference. Hints and suggestions were not only whispered but published that Mr. Chamberlain was unofficially aware of the preparations for the Raid, and would have accepted its results if it had proved successful.

Treason doth never prosper : what's the reason ?
Why, if it prosper, none dare call it treason.

Suspensions, however, as to what he may have conjectured did not affect the prestige which the Colonial Secretary enjoyed. He was celebrated as 'the pilot that weathered the storm.' The degree of D.C.L. was conferred on him by the University of Oxford in June, 1896, and Professor Goudy expressed the national feeling when he said the laurel crown of merit was due to one who, placed at the helm of the British ship at a period of storm and stress, had brought her safely through all the tempests, confident in himself, unterrified by threats of foreign Powers, desirous only of preserving and handing on undiminished to his successors the immense and precious possessions entrusted to his care.

Even at the beginning of 1897 Sir William Harcourt, the most vigilant and unflinching opponent of a forward policy, was satisfied with the Ministerial tone. In debate the Colonial Secretary alluded approvingly to the desire of all sections of the House of Commons to do everything possible to allay the feeling of race animosity in South Africa, and to promote those good relations between Dutch and English without which the peace and prosperity of the country were absolutely impossible. ' That,' he said, ' is my policy ; and that will be my policy consistently so long as I have the honour to hold my present office.' So pacific a declaration was regarded as specially important seeing that the situation gave cause for considerable anxiety. Mr. Chamberlain complained that recent legislation of the Transvaal Government contained provisions contrary to the Convention of

London, and that the response to the representations of the Uitlanders had been unsatisfactory. Nevertheless Sir William Harcourt found his speech prudent and moderate.

A change occurred in spring. It may have been due partly to President Kruger's bill of costs on account of the Raid, with the item of one million sterling for 'moral or intellectual damage.' When Mr. Chamberlain, in a quizzing tone, presented the little account to the House of Commons, it was received with mocking laughter and this was followed by a good deal of irritation. As a set-off he pressed his own counter statement of grievances, and then at last the peace party became alarmed. An angry scene occurred in April, when a vote of £200,000 was taken for the increase of the regular garrison in South Africa by a brigade of artillery and an additional regiment, considerable reinforcements being placed at Ladysmith, close to the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Sir William Harcourt delivered a very animated attack on the powerful Minister, declaring that in the previous few months he had been endeavouring to exasperate sentiment in South Africa, and to produce what 'thank God, he had failed in producing, a racial war.' This high-pitched language aroused passion in the House. Mr. Chamberlain, who had gone to his room, was sent for by Mr. Bal-four, and when he returned to the Treasury bench he was greeted by the Ministerialists with cheers of confidence. On the other hand the equally earnest Radicals expressed their approval while Sir William Harcourt continued his strictures. When he sat down, the Colonial Secretary sprang up and replied with unusual warmth, the words rushing from him in a torrent. He accused his critic of using 'pernicious and dangerous language, unpatriotic in the highest degree, embarrassing to the Government and injurious to the cause of peace.' 'On more than one occasion,' he said, 'the Transvaal Government have broken the Convention, and we are calling upon them in friendly and conciliatory terms to give us satisfaction. And this is the opportunity the right honourable gentleman takes to tell them that they are not to give us satisfaction, to tell them in effect it is we who are aggressive, that it is we who have taken the initiative, and that they will have the support of the Government and the people of Cape Colony.' This was the first of many severe encounters provoked by the case of the Transvaal between the two hardest hitters in Parliament.

The inquiry conducted by an influential committee of the House of Commons into the origin and circumstances of the Raid occupied a large portion of Mr. Chamberlain's time in 1897. All the personages prominently connected with that reckless event, the consequences of which were ever widening, were seen in a committee room in Westminster Hall, but none excited keener curiosity than the Minister himself. He also was on his trial. He had enemies who wished he might

be ruined in a political sense by evidence that he knew of the preparations for the Raid. Yet he had no reason to complain of the measure meted out to him by his colleagues on the Committee. The most interesting statement bearing on the suggestion of his own possible foreknowledge was made by Dr. Rutherford Harris, who was formerly Secretary in South Africa to the Chartered Company. Dr. Harris described an interview which he had with the Colonial Secretary and the Under Secretary (Lord Selborne) in August, 1895, on the subject of the proposed transfer of the Bechuanaland Protectorate to the Chartered Company.¹ He said that at this interview he referred to the unrest at Johannesburg and added a guarded allusion to the desirability of there being a police force near the border. The Committee and the audience waited breathlessly for what was to follow this reference, as it had been insinuated that an astute statesman must have suspected that the object was to have a force conveniently placed for 'jumping off' into the Transvaal. 'Mr. Chamberlain,' according to Dr. Harris, 'at once demurred to the turn the conversation had taken, and I never referred to the subject again.'

After hearing this evidence, the Colonial Secretary sat in the witness chair and gave his own recollection of the interview. He informed the Committee that Dr. Harris, on referring to the agitation of the Reformers, said, 'I could tell you something in confidence,' or 'I could give some confidential information,' and that he stopped him at once, remarking: 'I do not want to hear any confidential information. I am here in an official capacity, and I can only hear information of which I can make official use.' If any allusion were made to the desirability of there being a police force near the border, Mr. Chamberlain did not understand it as referring to anything such as subsequently occurred. He declared in the most explicit manner that he did not then have, and never had any knowledge nor—until he thought the day before the Raid took place—the slightest suspicion of anything in the nature of a hostile or armed undertaking. A month later, again tendering his own evidence, he spoke of the impressions left on his mind by the interview with Dr. Harris. He said he knew the Chartered Company were going to have troops near the border in connexion with the railway which was being constructed and any allusion such as that referred to would not have aroused suspicion in his mind. It had been asserted that in a subsequent conversation with Mr. Fairfield, the permanent official, who died before the inquiry took place, Dr. Harris said Mr. Rhodes thought it imperative to have troops on the border so that in the event of a disturbance taking place in Johannesburg he might be in a position, if

¹ A portion of the Protectorate was transferred to the Company in order that the railway to Bulawayo might be expedited, and might be wholly in the Chartered territory.

necessary, to use force, but Mr. Chamberlain expressed his conviction that if the words were used, his subordinate, who was very deaf, did not hear them or did not understand them. His denial of foreknowledge by the Department was supported by his colleague, Lord Selborne, a man of the strictest integrity and honour.

The Committee, which included several of his strongest political opponents, fully accepted his statement, and found that neither the Colonial Office nor the Secretary himself was in any way privy to or implicated in the Raid. Notwithstanding this exoneration, however, a doubt lingered in unfriendly minds. Suspicion was fed by what had occurred with reference to mysterious cablegrams which passed between Dr. Rutherford Harris and Mr. Rhodes in the latter part of 1895, and which were supposed to involve the complicity of the Department. Before the inquiry took place, when Mr. Chamberlain heard rumours about these messages, he insisted on seeing them, and when he returned them he instructed Mr. Fairfield to say he had no personal objection to their publication. The Committee called on Mr. Hawksley, Mr. Rhodes's solicitor, to produce the cablegrams, but he refused on the ground that he had no authority from his client to do so and although they threatened to take action in Parliament, they did nothing, because Mr. Hawksley would be the wrong man to punish, and they were unwilling to delay the completion of the inquiry in order to secure again the attendance of Mr. Rhodes who had returned to South Africa.

Some telegrams were obtained from the Eastern Telegraph Company which had passed between Mr. Rhodes and Miss Flora Shaw (afterwards the wife of Sir Frederick Lugard), a newspaper correspondent who went to the Colonial Office twice or thrice a week for journalistic purposes. Miss Shaw, who was aware that a rising was contemplated, wired to Mr. Rhodes on December 17, 1895, 'Chamberlain sound in case of interference European Powers, but have special reason to believe wishes you must do it immediately.' This she had founded on a remark by Mr. Fairfield, 'Well, if the Johannesburgers are going to rise, it is to be hoped they will do it soon.' On December 30, after the Raid, a telegram in Mr. Rhodes's name was despatched to the lady journalist, 'Inform Chamberlain that I shall get through all right if he supports me but he must not send cable like he sent to High Commissioner in South Africa.' This was the cable containing the warning with reference to the Charter. On January 1, 1896, Miss Shaw telegraphed, 'Chamberlain awfully angry,' but she stated at the inquiry that that report was based on no official communication whatever. To her telegrams the Committee attached little importance. They whetted, however, the appetite of the public for revelations, and increased the suspicions of those who distrusted the Colonial Secretary.

Radicals in debate on the report of the Committee on July 26, 1897,

expressed discontent with their 'inconclusive action' and especially complained of the non-production of the Harris and Rhodes cablegrams, but Sir William Harcourt defended Mr. Chamberlain, relying on his evidence and stating that there was not the smallest ground on which they were entitled to entertain a doubt of his conduct. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman also trusted the Minister's word, and made fun of cablegrams from A to B about C. Several of the members who called for the documents expressed their own disbelief in the insinuations against the Colonial Secretary. At the same time, an independent Unionist, in pressing for further inquiry, showed concern for his honour. 'I am perfectly content,' proudly retorted Mr. Chamberlain, 'to leave my honour to take care of itself.' His answer to his accusers lay in his action; he pointed to what he did when the Raid took place, without knowing whether it was successful or not. 'I had,' he said, 'the advice of many persons interested in South Africa, who called upon me, to hold my hand, and I had every excuse for holding my hand. I was alone in London; I had no communication with my colleagues; I had to act at a moment's notice; and I did act in spite of all the temptations to refrain, in spite of the doubts in my own mind, because I felt that the act of Dr. Jameson was wrong and that therefore as a Minister of the Crown I was bound to repudiate it.'

One of the strangest incidents in this perplexing affair startled the Liberals during the debate on the Committee's report. According to their findings, in which the Colonial Secretary concurred, Mr. Rhodes was involved in grave breaches of duty to those to whom he owed allegiance; and he was censured for subsidizing, organizing and stimulating an armed insurrection against the Government of the South African Republic and employing the forces and resources of the Chartered Company to support such a revolution. Great was the surprise, and on one side at least great was the shock, caused by Mr. Chamberlain's comment on the empire-builder who was thus condemned. 'I am perfectly convinced,' he said, 'that while the fault of Mr. Rhodes is about as great a fault as a politician or statesman can commit, there has been nothing proved—and in my opinion there exists nothing—which affects Mr. Rhodes's personal position as a man of honour.' While Conservatives of the forward school of Imperialism cheered this declaration Liberals were thoroughly astounded. They sat in voiceless amazement for a moment, and then relieved their feelings by indignant murmurs.

Suspicion was revived by so unexpected a palliation of the chief offender's conduct. Although Mr. Rhodes himself had informed the Committee of Inquiry that he did not state to any one that Mr. Chamberlain knew anything regarding the preparations for the Raid, it was asserted that his friends could, if they would, make damaging

revelations. This idea of a sword hanging over the Minister's head was maintained for several years by gossips who pretended to know all about the letters and telegrams referred to in the inquiry. At last in the beginning of 1900, the mysterious documents, or a number of them, appeared in a Belgian newspaper, and thereupon the insinuations and charges were quickly dropped except by certain extreme censors of the Colonial Secretary's proceedings who insisted on describing him as a conspirator. The bomb proved harmless. There was nothing in 'that precious collection of documents'—as Mr. Chamberlain called it—which was not known to the Committee when they gave their report. Although, however, his conduct with reference to the Raid thus stood the scrutiny of time nothing could convince the Boers that he was not concerned in it and his personal certificate to Mr. Rhodes, which he defended privately on the ground that it would be politically inexpedient to drive him to the wall, was held responsible for the obstinacy of President Kruger, and for the suspicion which fostered the war feeling. 'Of all forms of prestige,' writes Mr. Lecky, in glancing at this episode, 'moral prestige is the most valuable, and no statesman should forget that one of the chief elements of British power is the moral weight that is behind it. It is the conviction that British power is essentially honourable and straightforward, that the word and honour of its statesmen and diplomatists may be implicitly trusted, and that intrigues and deceptions are wholly alien to their nature.'¹

¹ *The Map of Life.*

XXIX

THE NEW IMPERIALIST

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S manner changed after his appointment as a Secretary of State. For nine years his temper had been tried by quarrels with old friends ; he had become even more pugnacious and provocative and at the same time more sensitive than in earlier years. Office and power now soothed him, let loose his will, and brought out his higher qualities. His face assumed a less bitter, less sardonic aspect, and his language a more persuasive form. Instead of being always the party controversialist ready to take and give offence, and eagerly seeking to disparage former colleagues, he adopted the loftier, serener air of one who spoke for the country. As the *Times* in its review of the session of 1897 bore testimony Mr. Chamberlain distinctly increased his high political reputation. 'In addition to his old qualities of intrepidity, adroitness and trenchant power of reasoning, he displayed a more mature capacity for taking broad and decided yet sober views of complex situations and problems.' Unfortunately the old spirit was to break out again, but for a period he rose above the politician engrossed in party controversies. His ambition took a wider range.

The passion of imperialism kindled by his resistance to Home Rule was fanned by his colonial administration in the coalition Government. We have seen that he had repudiated the parochialism of which he formerly boasted, and now he dropped into poetry to popularize the idea of the empire's unity. Early in 1896, at a dinner in London, he expressed this sentiment in the words of Tennyson :—

Britain's myriad voices call
Sons, be welded each and all,
Into one imperial whole.
One with Britain, heart and soul !
One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne.

A year later, at the Jewellers' Dinner in Birmingham, he complained that the leaders of the Opposition gave excessive attention to domestic controversies—'which after all, whichever way they are settled, are of minor importance'—and forgot the great part which the country had played and was called upon to play in the history of the world. 'Let the Little Englanders say what they like, we are a great governing race, predestined by our defects as well as by our virtues, to spread over the habitable globe, to enter into relations with all the

countries of the earth. Our trade, the employment of our people, our very existence depends upon it. We cannot occupy an insular position, and we cannot occupy ourselves entirely with parochial matters.'

Patriotism was the subject of an eloquent address delivered by Mr. Chamberlain in November, 1897, as Lord Rector of Glasgow University. He assured the students that through all his vicissitudes he had always sought the greatness of the empire and the welfare of the people at large. The boast may have been justified, but the 'greatness of the empire' now figured much more conspicuously than in his earlier speeches. 'Is it contended,' he asked, 'that the weary Titan staggers under the too vast orb of her fate, and that we have not the strength to sustain the burden of the empire?' He forgot that about twenty years previously he admitted that 'already the weary Titan staggers under the too vast orb of her fate.'¹ In the interval evidently the Titan had borne the burden well. The time was again to come when Mr. Chamberlain would say: 'The weary Titan staggers,' but in 1897, he asked: 'Why should we shrink from our task, or allow the sceptre of empire to fall from our hands—

Through craven fears of being great?'

At a banquet at Glasgow on November 4, he crystallized his sentiments in the bold utterance: 'We believe in the greatness of the empire. We are not afraid of its expansion. We think that a nation, like an individual, is the better for having great responsibilities and great obligations.'

✧ The idea of imperial federation, of a closer link with the colonies, took increasing hold of his imagination. He introduced it in many speeches, and at Liverpool in January, 1898, he expressed his aspiration in the words of an 'imperial-minded poet':—²

Also, we will make promise. So long as The Blood endures,
I shall know that your good is mine: ye shall feel that my strength is yours:
In the day of Armageddon, at the last great fight of all,
That Our House stand together and the pillars do not fall.

¹ Yes, we arraign her! but she,
The weary Titan, with deaf
Ears and labour-dimmed eyes,
Regarding neither to right
Nor left, goes passively by,
Staggering on to her goal;
Bearing on shoulders immense,
Atlantean, the load,
Well-nigh not to be borne,
Of the too vast orb of her fate.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

² 'England's Answer' in *Rudyard Kipling Reciter*.

While there was a new, boastful ring in some of his utterances, he maintained a high conception of national duty. For instance, he said at Birmingham: 'The Providence that shapes our ends intended us to be a great governing power—conquering, yes conquering, but conquering only in order to civilize, to administer and to develop vast races on the world's surface, primarily for their advantage, but no doubt for our advantage as well.'

✓ Some embarrassment was caused to the Foreign Office by Mr. Chamberlain's language and action in 1898. Liberals accused him of trying to pick a quarrel with France when he was promoting British interests with—perhaps too much—impetuosity. At the close of a sitting of the House of Commons he read with dramatic effect telegrams announcing that a French force had invaded British territory in the hinterland of Lagos. The two countries were then active in West Africa; their relations were in a delicate condition, and it was feared that a collision might take place which would lead to war. While Mr. Chamberlain was blamed by Liberals at home for hot-headness, he became the foreign bogey of the Paris press, and admirers explained that this meant that France could not squeeze him. Fortunately the matters in dispute in West Africa were settled by a Convention, by which we secured sufficient hinterland for our colonies. Notwithstanding the sneers excited by his new diplomacy when applied to the Transvaal, he introduced it in European controversy. To his mind, he candidly said, there was no longer any room for the mysteries and the reticences of the diplomacy of fifty years ago. Ours, as he argued, is a democratic Government; we gain all our strength from the confidence of the people, and we cannot gain strength or have that confidence unless we show confidence in return.

✓ This doctrine, which Mr. Chamberlain may have laid down for the benefit of Lord Salisbury, was carried too far. In a sensational passage of a speech on May 13, 1898, referring to the methods by which Russia secured the occupation of Port Arthur, he remarked that he had always thought it was a very wise proverb: 'Who sups with the devil must have a long spoon.'¹ On the same occasion he drew an alarmist picture of the combination of great Powers by which we might be confronted at any moment, and he strongly advocated an Anglo-Saxon alliance—an alliance, that is to say, with our kinsmen across the Atlantic. This speech, according to an observer, partly amused and partly scandalized Europe; and in America also it caused no little surprise. Foreign telegrams to the British papers were full of comments on the 'long spoon.' Everybody wondered what Lord Salisbury thought of it. Lord Kimberley said he would certainly be sorry to be responsible for foreign affairs with Mr. Cham-

¹ DROMIO—'He must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil.'

berlain as a colleague, but when the attention of the Peers was called to his too frank utterance, Lord Salisbury declined to discuss the matter 'without adequate opportunity of examining the accuracy' of the quotations. This was interpreted by cynical listeners to mean that he had not read his colleague's remarks, and if the interpretation was correct Mr. Chamberlain soon had his tit-for-tat with his chief. On the subject being discussed in the House of Commons and reference made to a statement by Lord Salisbury at a Primrose League meeting the Colonial Secretary retorted that he had not a copy of the Prime Minister's speech! This was the quip sarcastic. As to the assertion that he differed from his chief, he gaily said: 'I have not resigned; I have not been cast out by my colleagues.' This was the retort defiant. Probably when the secrets of the coalition are revealed it will be found that Mr. Chamberlain's position in the Government at this time was difficult, if not precarious.

'Touting for an ally in the highways and byways of Europe,' was Mr. Asquith's contemptuous description of his foreign policy, and the Liberal critic also deprecated the use of 'picturesque metaphors drawn from the dialect of the new diplomacy.' A Conservative member who regarded the old Radical with jealousy likened his language to that of ancient Pistol, when eating the leek. Mr. Chamberlain did not apologize, but explained that the only alliance he advocated in the meantime was with the United States. The significance of hard words was never exaggerated by one who used them so freely. He gave them and took them as part of the political order of life. A few days after he had been denounced by Mr. Asquith, the two statesmen and their wives, accompanied by several friends, visited the 'Old Cheshire Cheese' in Fleet Street. They had an admirable cicerone for the occasion in Mr. Birrell, who supplied them with much curious lore concerning the tavern. The association of the 'Cheshire Cheese' with Dr. Johnson, however slight it may have been, is sufficient to draw many Americans, and no doubt Mrs. Chamberlain as a native of a new country felt the spell of the old.

The Fashoda affair, which if rashly handled might have led to war, reached its dangerous crisis while the exponent of the new diplomacy was on a visit to America. Even he, however, was satisfied with the resoluteness with which Lord Salisbury acted when it became known that Major Marchand, with a small force, had reached the basin of the Upper Nile, and in spite of a warning that such a step would be regarded by us as an unfriendly act, had hoisted the French flag. There was deep anxiety during the negotiations which followed Lord Kitchener's arrival at Fashoda, and his claim to it on behalf of Great Britain and Egypt. Fortunately good temper and good counsel prevailed and while we disclaimed any desire to pick a quarrel with

our neighbours, they decided not to retain the mission at a place where it was powerless. Speaking at Manchester on November 15, soon after his return from America, Mr. Chamberlain said the people of this country wanted to be friends of the great nation on the other side of the Channel, but friendship must be based on mutual respect and mutual consideration, and he recalled certain provocative proceedings of the French in the past. On the following day he urged the establishment of close relations with Germany besides a combination between the two great English-speaking peoples. His wishes outran the general sentiment. But a few weeks later he remarked that although the British Empire was well able to defend against all attack its own possessions and its own exclusive interests, there were interests in which Germany and England could agree to assist each other's policy, and he pleaded once more also for a cordial friendship with the United States.

Even during the war with the Boers, if we may anticipate the narrative, Mr. Chamberlain did not hesitate to rebuke foreign countries. Correct diplomatists doubted the discretion of admonition at a time when we were hard pressed in South Africa, with scarcely any powerful friends anywhere, but proud, high-spirited words were on the whole approved by the populace. On November 30, 1899, at Leicester, shortly after an interview with the Kaiser at Windsor, the Colonial Secretary again recommended a new Triple Alliance between the Teutonic race and the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon people. At the same time he warned the French that attacks on Queen Victoria by their journalists and caricaturists had 'provoked in this country a natural indignation which will have serious consequences if our neighbours do not mend their manners.' For this rough threat, which caused some statesmen at home to shudder, Mr. Chamberlain was ridiculed and reprimanded in the French press. Elsewhere his 'touting' overtures for allies were received coldly. President McKinley in a message to Congress, on December 5, alluding to the South African War, significantly said: 'We have remained faithful to the precept of avoiding entangling alliances as to affairs not of direct concern.'

In the case of Germany Mr. Chamberlain's attitude was sarcastically compared by a Unionist journal to the conduct of the imaginary Edwin who, while he is only a *soupirant*, and not the engaged lover, announces that his marriage has been arranged with Angelina. The facts, however, as stated by his friends, were that Count von Bülow, the German Chancellor, called unofficially upon him at his private residence, and in the course of conversation remarked that much good could be effected by the fostering of the most cordial relations between the two countries, and that no one could contribute more successfully

to this desirable consummation than Mr. Chamberlain, with his wonderful influence upon the minds of the democracy. In response to this friendly suggestion the Colonial Secretary, without consulting his colleagues, delivered the Leicester speech. It was received very badly in Germany with the result that, as he said, the Chancellor threw him over in the Reichstag.

There was one direction in which Mr. Chamberlain's imperialism was manifested both nobly and consistently. A tribute is due to him for his action in securing merciful treatment for the natives of colonies. He would have agreed with the passage in which De Quincey wrote: 'If a *Te Deum*, or an *O, Jubilate!* were to be celebrated by all nations and languages for any one advance and absolute conquest over wrong and error won by human nature in our times—yes, not excepting "the bloody writing by all nations torn"—the abolition of the commerce in slaves—to my thinking, that festival should be for the mighty progress made towards the suppression of brutal, bestial modes of punishment.' Against brutal modes Mr. Chamberlain steadily and watchfully set himself, maintaining in office the humanitarian views which he expressed as an independent member.

His mark was left conspicuously on West Africa, where our territories in the hinterland were not only extended but clearly delimited, and where a new administration was introduced, and he contributed also to the development of the West Indies. In his dealings with the rulers of the great dominions he was an acceptable Secretary of State. He maintained the imperial authority with firmness. At the same time he was free both from condescension and from indifference. He showed a most eager desire to strengthen the friendship and affection between the mother country and the colonies and to increase their common interest, and his aspirations were warmly reciprocated across the seas. It proved a wise course to give the Secretaryship to so prominent and powerful a statesman. Colonial ministers were gratified to deal with one so celebrated, and one so able to secure attention to their views. His régime was in several respects exceedingly interesting and if war had not left upon it the mark of blood all his fellow-citizens would have regarded it with sympathy and admiration.

'THE HAND OF JOAB'

A SHREWD and frank Conservative noting Mr. Chamberlain's manifold occupations in the year of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, said he did not wonder that Mr. Kruger proved himself superior to the finished diplomatists of more civilised nations. The ruler of the Transvaal, as he remarked, was free from the necessity of attending to Employers' Liability and Old Age Pensions and strikes of Trades Unions, and the thousand different subjects on which the energies of our statesmen were 'frittered away.' Those who had hoped that the Colonial Secretary would confine his zeal to the affairs of the Colonies were disappointed. There may have been enough even for his mind in his own department, but he had extolled the Unionists as the party of social reform; it was in that character that they obtained their majority; and he continued his effort to leaven Conservatism with his own sort of Radicalism, and to show that his new colleagues, and not the Liberals, were the true friends of the people. A statesman so ready for change was still distrusted by the contented classes. 'Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look. He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.' At the same time he was obliged to acquiesce in measures which Liberals considered retrograde, and which were opposed to the instincts and principles of his earlier days.

The year 1896 would not have been a happy one for him if he cared much for consistency. His opponents were able to jeer while the Government of which he was so prominent a member gave grants in relief of the landed interest and voluntary schools. 'Doles to the squire and the parson!' cried the scornful, mocking Radicals. During the debates on such matters Mr. Chamberlain was as a rule conspicuous by his absence from the House. He attended to answer questions, but on these being finished he retired to his own room. At Birmingham, however, it was necessary for the former champion of a non-sectarian system to refer to the Education Bill, and he defended it with reckless courage. He admitted that in 1870 he was in favour of the extinction of the voluntary schools, and he confessed, 'I have changed my mind.' His excuse was financial. Voluntary schools had enormously increased until now they provided for the education of four-sevenths of the children of the country, and in these circum-

stances he was not prepared for the cost of rooting up the system. Many other Liberals, as well as Mr. Asquith, read his speech on the subject, 'with something akin to the sense of admiring bewilderment which overtakes us when at an earlier stage of our life we first make the discovery that it is equally easy for an accomplished acrobat to stand upon his head or upon his heels.'

The bill was withdrawn in 1896 for want of time, Mr. Balfour impatiently remarking that in her old age the Mother of Parliaments was becoming somewhat garrulous, but in the following year a new measure was introduced 'for the Promotion of Primary Education, by securing the Maintenance of Voluntary Schools.' In their first scheme the Government proposed to give four shillings per child in average attendance; the second raised the new grant in voluntary schools to five shillings. This it was estimated would amount in 1897 to £615,000, while provision made in a subsequent measure for the relief of necessitous Board schools was calculated at about £100,000 a year. Liberals demanded the maintenance of equality between the two systems as established in 1870. 'We are removing inequalities,' replied Mr. Chamberlain, and he defended the new grant as being necessary to save the voluntary schools from extinction. Sorrowing comment on his change of attitude was made by the editor who published his early views on education in the *Fortnightly*. When the leader of the Nonconformists attacked the Act of 1870 as unfair to them, no one could have foreseen that he would become the champion of the clergy and denounce it as unfair to the clerical party. As Mr. Morley said, he executed an exultant war dance over the grave of his dead self.

The session of 1897 was chiefly Mr. Chamberlain's session. He was the centre of interest. Those who had declared that he was played out discovered to their sorrow that he remained the most potent force in politics. His aims and ambitions were revealed during the debates on the Workmen (Compensation for Accidents) Bill. Amid the occupations of his department and the distractions of the South African inquiry he found time and opportunity to promote this section of his social programme. Instead of retiring to his own room, as was his practice during the education controversies, he watched the progress of the Compensation Bill through the House of Commons, and although it was nominally in charge of the Home Secretary, its real sponsor and guide proved to be the Secretary for the Colonies. 'Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?' asked a mocking Conservative.

Unlike previous projects for compensation, Mr. Chamberlain contended that the new measure was based upon the principle of relieving the workman, and not of punishing the employer; and he held that although undoubtedly it would in the first instance impose a new liability the employer would be able to distribute the liability over the

trade in which he was engaged. The pecuniary burden of the accident would, he argued, fall as a first charge upon the industry itself, and not upon the victim of the accident. In his effort to educate or conciliate doubting Conservatives he told them it was natural that a bill of this kind should come from them. He recalled that when he stood for Sheffield in 1874 he pointed out to his Liberal friends that they were most backward in social legislation, and that all such reform had been initiated and to a large extent enacted by the Tory party. 'I said that in 1874, and I say it in 1897.' All Tories were not so gratified or convinced by this record as they might have been. The Compensation Bill was opposed by a section, which, although small, was not without influence.

This was the most important measure of a contentious character which Mr. Chamberlain carried through the House of Commons. His critics were accustomed to say that faults of temper, and too much insistence on the grievance to be remedied, would prevent his success in piloting a difficult bill—that he would not suffer fools gladly. On this occasion he falsified the prediction. 'His personal courtesy'—runs a note made at the time—'has been as conspicuous as his adroitness, and in spite of many temptations he has avoided any display of irritation. It is altogether due to his ability and influence that such a bill should have been accepted by his allies.'

The bill was described by some of his Conservative friends as part of the price that they had to pay for the immense assistance he rendered to them. Lord Londonderry grudged the price. He resented the domination of one 'whose Radical views on home politics were always regarded with disapproval,' and complained that the bill was a departure from the policy of the Unionists at the General Election, and when the Marquis of Salisbury said that Mr. Chamberlain was 'the spokesman of our party on this subject,' he looked up the memorable speech in which the Marquis had expressed surprise that Lord Hartington and Lord Granville should sit in the same Cabinet with the member for Birmingham. This was an ordeal to which Lord Londonderry himself subsequently submitted, but in his vexation he turned the taunt against the statesman who had used it. Another man of property sarcastically observed that although the Colonial Secretary had not annexed Johannesburg he had annexed the Conservative party. There was a controversy on his position, at the close of the session of 1897, in the Conservative organ, the *St. James's Gazette*, and the writers made it clear that his chief recommendation to his new associates was his imperialism; for the sake of this his domestic politics were tolerated.

The coalition proved so gratifying to the Liberal Unionists that they ceased to regret their separation from the Gladstonians, and began to wonder how they should ever have associated with such fellows.

'There is,' said their leader, 'a great gulf fixed which we cannot pass over, and the gulf extends to foreign policy and to domestic policy as well.' On the other hand, he boasted of the completeness of the new coalition. The mixing of the two sections under Lord Salisbury had been compared to the mixing of oil and water. 'No,' remarked Mr. Chamberlain, 'we are rather like what occurs in a trade in which a blend is made; when two vintages are combined to the great advantage of both.' There was, apparently, a closer commingling of elements in the Unionist Government than in the Liberal Cabinets in which he sat, and as the coalition advanced in age the old Radical became more and more conscious of the political virtues of his allies. With unction he informed the Conservatives in 1898 that they 'had been in a special sense the great apostles of social reform. Who was their leader? It was Mr. Disraeli who laid the seeds of his doctrine in his great novel of *Sybil*.¹ Though he found his party slow to educate, yet they made such progress under his guidance and under the subsequent guidance of Lord Randolph Churchill and others, that they had now arrived at a position in which they may fairly claim that it is to their efforts and to their legislation that the great social reforms now impressed upon the statute book of this country are due.'

Notwithstanding their different temperaments and tendencies Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain acted together with less friction than had been expected. For the sake of the objects on which they were agreed both buried or concealed certain prejudices. Recalling, in November, 1899, their former relations, Mr. Chamberlain jocularly said that Lord Salisbury had called him Jack Cade, but he always thought Jack Cade was a much misunderstood person! On the other hand, he had said many disagreeable things about Lord Salisbury. (Perhaps that was a consolation.) 'But,' he continued, 'nothing that he said of me, and nothing that I ever said of him, ever prevented our co-operating cordially upon what fortunately we were both able to believe was for the interests of the nation. When we came together to look at the merits of some of those propositions, which otherwise might have been the subject of party criticism, we found that upon the merits we were entirely agreed.'

Even with this agreement, however, the product of social legislation in the Parliament of 1895 was small. His experience in the case of the Compensation for Accidents Bill did not encourage the reforming partner in the Downing Street firm to push other reforms which were distasteful to Tories, and as the years passed he was con-

¹ This was the leader who, according to Mr. Chamberlain in 1876, flung at the British Parliament the first lie that entered his head and exhibited his cynical contempt for the honour of England—the leader of a Ministry which, as he declared in 1880, 'never said the thing they meant and never did a wise one.'

strained to give up to South Africa a great deal of what was intended for home. Moreover, Irish Land Purchase and Irish Local Government consumed much time and legislative energy. It was not until 1899 that the Ministers proceeded with the Small Houses Bill which their spokesman had promised at the General Election. This measure empowered Local Authorities to advance money for enabling working men to purchase the houses in which they resided. Liberals predicted that it would prove of little use, but Mr. Chamberlain, who had charge of it, made the most of an instalment of the social programme. His connexion with such legislation was, as a sarcastic Tory observed, a remarkable extension of the duties of the Colonial Office. As a set off he acquiesced in silence, while his Tory colleagues did something for their special friends by relieving the clerical tithe-owner of the payment of half the rates on the tithe.

Old age pensions played a familiar part in the Parliament of 1895-1900. The question was reopened at frequent intervals, recriminations took place, promises and protests were made, inquiries were instituted, but there was no progress. Financial considerations were pleaded by Mr. Chamberlain as an excuse for delay, and the Friendly Societies also were held responsible. He hoped that something might be done before the end of that Parliament, but while he indulged in a vague hope his Transvaal policy was carrying affairs to the cataract in which old age programmes and other social schemes were dashed and destroyed.

Foreign impressions of Mr. Chamberlain at a time when his name had become known throughout the world, were interesting and informing. During a visit to the United States in the autumn of 1898 he was greatly interviewed. That is to say, many attempts were made to interview him, and many reports of alleged conversations were published, although in some cases they showed more imagination than knowledge on the part of the writer. The *New York Journal* devoted a page to the celebrated English statesman and 'his famous monocle.' He is depicted in ten attitudes, in which the eye-glass plays a part, and the jocular dialogue is entirely about the monocle. 'How do you keep it on? Did it ever drop without your will or knowledge? Can you sneeze without taking it off?' These are among the questions to which the visitor replies, while he adjusts the monocle, or lets it fall on his 'yellow linen waistcoat over the fourth button.' 'A round glass in a frame of gold, thin as a grandmother's wedding ring'—that is the journalist's description of the eye-glass.

French comments were rather unsympathetic. A writer in a Paris newspaper in November, 1898, sneered at Mr. Chamberlain, not only as a renegade Radical but also as a sexagenarian dandy, and declared that his eye-glass was taken by his partisans for a cockade, and that his invariable orchid easily assumed the aspect of a plume. Even the

Parisian critics, however, agreed in describing him as the most influential English statesman of the time. They professed to believe that what he said to-day his colleagues would think to-morrow; and while Liberals at home asserted that the Tory party had captured him, one of the journalists on the other side of the Channel remarked that he carried ‘in the pocket of his correct frock-coat the powerful and corpulent Marquis of Salisbury.’ In an interesting volume published in Paris in 1899 he is described as an intelligent and audacious politician; and the author declares that after having hoped twelve years previously to become the leader of the Liberal party he now aspired to the direction of the Conservatives. ‘He makes advances to the Tories; he shows himself more and more moderate in his projects of social legislation; he speaks no more—he, the *farouche* Dissenter, of the separation of Church and State; he constitutes himself the defender, the apologist of the House of Lords.’¹

¹ *J. Chamberlain*, by Achille Viallate.

XXXI

STRUGGLE WITH KRUGER

IF the statesmen who, on March 27, 1897, entertained Sir Alfred Milner to dinner on his appointment to succeed Lord Rosmead as High Commissioner of South Africa, could have foreseen the part he was to play in the destiny of the empire, the vision of the future would have cast gloom on the banquet, and several of the faces which glowed with sympathy might have turned away in sorrow and sadness. Liberals as well as Unionists joined in the farewell tribute. An Oxford graduate who had risen from journalism through a private secretaryship to high appointments in the public service, to whom political leaders on both sides expressed their indebtedness, Sir Alfred Milner was distinguished for tact and charm as well as for unusual ability. Lord Rosebery wrote that he had the union of intellect with fascination which makes men mount high. A fitter agent, in the opinion of his entertainers, could not have been found for the part of a conciliator. His quick mind was to grasp the situation ; he was to cajole or convince President Kruger ; he was to subtly strengthen British supremacy by obtaining redress of the Uitlanders' grievances. This was the conception of his mission and his future in the minds of friends, although a considerable section of financiers and—it was suspected—some persons in the official world contemplated and desired a war.

While Sir Alfred Milner began his work in South Africa, familiarizing himself with its tangled problems and with the feelings of the races, Mr. Chamberlain drew as much attention as possible at home through the Parliamentary inquiry to the complaints of the Johannesburg reformers whose cause had been prejudiced by the Raid. To preserve our position as the paramount Power, and to bring about a better state of feeling between British and Dutch, were his declared objects. The Transvaal Government were suspicious, and increased their armaments. They denied our right to interfere, and the friends of the Boers in this country contended that instead of expecting them to make concessions to the British on the Rand, we should more thoroughly wipe from our hands the stain left by Dr. Jameson's armed incursion. At the beginning of 1898, in reply to a question in the House of Commons, Mr. Chamberlain stated that Her Majesty's Government would continue to abstain from interference in the internal affairs of the Republic as

long as the terms of the Convention of 1882 were strictly observed. This was a double-edged answer, seeing that breaches of the Convention were then being charged against the Transvaal.

The year 1898 passed in peaceful communications, and in November Sir Alfred Milner came home for a consultation with the Colonial Secretary, who had been watching and waiting. In his absence the Acting High Commissioner was General Sir William Butler who had just been appointed to the command at the Cape. Sir William Butler before leaving England had an interview with Mr. Chamberlain, and he has left in his *Autobiography* a vivid description of the 'eager, white, sharp, anxious, tight-drawn face which was leaning towards me over the office table.' Going out to South Africa in a very wary if not a suspicious frame of mind he was soon convinced that Mr. Rhodes and his henchmen, or 'the party of the Raid,' were trying to provoke a war by fanning into flame the embers of racial ill-feeling. In a dispatch written in January, 1899, he drew attention to influences which were at work with this object. A political aspect was being given to the case of Edgar, a man of British nationality who had been shot by a policeman in Johannesburg, but Sir William Butler regarded it as an ordinary brawl and stated that the agitation was artificially engineered with the view to affect opinion at home. His dispatch, however, was read by Sir Alfred Milner, on the return of the latter to the Cape in February, with 'undisguised impatience.¹ Whatever may have been arranged between the Colonial Secretary and the High Commissioner while the latter was home, diplomatic action soon afterwards became more urgent and imperative, if not really aggressive, in tone. The way was prepared for active measures by a petition which was forwarded to the Queen from over 21,000 of her subjects in the Transvaal complaining of oppression and unjust treatment, and of exclusion from the franchise. This was the beginning of a movement which did not halt till the sword was drawn. According to Sir William Butler the Colonial Office was 'running mad for war,' and it was possible that Mr. Chamberlain might 'live in history as Lord North lives, but without even the excuse of having a bad King to lead him on the road to ruin.' However this may be, public opinion at home was certainly in an inflammable condition.

A dispatch from the High Commissioner in May, 1899, stirred the smouldering fire into a blaze. Sir Alfred Milner emphatically asserted the reality of the grievances alleged by the Uitlanders, the genuineness of the agitation for reform, and the necessity of securing political rights. 'The spectacle,' he wrote, 'of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots, constantly chafing under undoubted grievances, and, calling vainly to Her Majesty's

¹ *Sir William Butler : An Autobiography.*

Government for redress, does steadily undermine the influence of Great Britain and the respect for the British Government within the Queen's dominions.' This passage, composed in a style quite unusual in an official document, provoked passionate controversy. It was quoted by the forward party of Imperialists as proof of the urgent necessity of strong measures, and was denounced by many Liberals as an example of irresponsible and sensational journalism. According to hostile critics, the journalist—who, by the way, was trained in the severe school of Mr. John Morley on the *Pall Mall Gazette*—had swallowed up the diplomatist and statesman. Sir Alfred Milner was undoubtedly a master of language and, as Sir William Butler recorded, he foresaw the effect of his words. The Colonial Secretary responded in thorough sympathy and prepared a dispatch insisting on reasonable concessions to the Uitlanders' just demands. This, however, was held back, pending the result of a conference between President Kruger and Sir Alfred Milner, who met at Bloemfontein on the last day of May.

A section of the Cabinet was still recommending patience and the High Commissioner himself may have desired that he should have an opportunity of seeing whether he could not settle matters by personal negotiation. No doubt of Mr. Chamberlain's sincerity was felt when he expressed the earnest hope that a satisfactory settlement would be arrived at. For a considerable time longer he believed that the Transvaal would yield to pressure. Unfortunately the two negotiators went to Bloemfontein with ideas and aims which were irreconcilable. Discussion turned mainly on the question of the franchise. President Kruger proposed to refer all differences to the arbitration of a Foreign Power, but the High Commissioner informed him that Her Majesty's Government would not consent to intervention in disputes between themselves and the South African Republic. The President's offers with regard to the franchise were considered altogether inadequate; agreement proved impossible, and the Conference broke up without any result.

'A new situation had thus been created,' said Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons on June 8, and he added in an ominous tone that the dispatch which had been held back would now be communicated to the Government of the Republic. His conduct at this stage was watched by the rival parties at home with conflicting sentiments, but with equal vigilance. Questions were asked almost every day in Parliament, one section of members holding him back and another urging him forward, while the Boers with increasing suspicion continued to arm for a conflict for which we were making no adequate preparation. Disregarding Sir William Butler's warnings our Government were expecting too much from a resolute attitude and a mere show of force.

A strange incident, not disclosed till about five years later, took place soon after the Bloemfontein Conference. On June 20 Mr. Chamberlain wrote to 'My dear Campbell-Bannerman,' who had succeeded Sir William Harcourt as leader of the Liberal party in the House of Commons, desiring a few minutes talk about the Transvaal. In the conversation which ensued he stated that the Government proposed to send out 10,000 men to South Africa and asked whether the Opposition would join in recommending that step to the House and the country. As Sir Henry (according to his record of the interview) expressed a little surprise the Colonial Secretary went on to say: 'You need not be alarmed. There will be no fighting. We know that those fellows (the Boers) won't fight. We are playing a game of bluff.' When the incident was recalled, Mr. Chamberlain denied that he had any idea whatever of bluffing in the popular sense of the word, but he could not charge his memory with a contradiction of the phrase. Written words remained. Sir Henry, after consulting with colleagues, informed the Colonial Secretary by letter that he could not see his way to give any assurance that the Opposition would be ready to acquiesce in any open military demonstration such as the dispatch of a force to the Cape. 'We feel very strongly,' he added, 'that in so grave a matter the undivided responsibility must rest with the Government.' Mr. Chamberlain replied, thanking him for his letter. 'I appreciate its spirit and do not quarrel with its conclusions.' Subsequently, on an occasion to be described at the proper place, he made these conclusions the matter of taunt and complaint.

The new leader of the Opposition was under-estimated by the Unionist statesmen. They saw in him a good-natured, shrewd, canny, rich and—as it was supposed—rather lazy man of the world whose rise although steady had been very slow, who was fonder of French novels than of Blue-books and who was merely a stop-gap till destiny should decide between Lord Rosebery and Sir William Harcourt. His frank expression of unpopular opinions was regarded as evidence of unskilful leadership by politicians who did not foresee that a day would come when the country would give an unprecedented majority to the man of settled conviction and straightforward purpose. With his head held a little to the side, sometimes with a yawn on his broad, genial face, sometimes with a twinkle in his eye, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman staunchly held his post during the obloquy of years.

'I make not, but foresee,' says the soothsayer. Some suspicious observers believe that Mr. Chamberlain 'made' the facts in the Transvaal crisis; others think that he did not even foresee them. From the date of the 'helots' dispatch events rushed swiftly. The Secretary of State entered a grave indictment against the Boers in a speech at Birmingham on June 26, when he complained of 'a menace to British

interests and a serious danger to our position as the paramount Power in South Africa.' In the course of fifteen years we had been four times on the verge of war with the Transvaal: in 1885, when the Warren expedition was carried out to stop encroachments over the border; in 1894, in the time of the Liberal Administration, when President Kruger attempted forcibly to enlist British subjects, to tax them and to take their goods in support of his battles with the native tribes, although he refused to give them any representation or share in the government of the country; in 1895, when the Cape Ministry asked our assistance, and promised their own co-operation in order to prevent the arbitrary action of the Transvaal in closing the roads to the passage of colonial merchandise; and again in 1897, when we had to protest against the Alien Immigration Law, which was declared to be a distinct breach of the Convention. By an accumulation of grievances Mr. Chamberlain now prepared a case for war. He protested, however, that there was no one in the length and breadth of the land who desired to quarrel with the Transvaal Republic.

Rumours of military preparations at home began to circulate early in July, and *The Times* announced that a force of 10,000 men was to be sent out. After many questions had been asked in the House of Commons members ascertained that this announcement had been made with the knowledge of the Secretary for War. The idea, as Mr. Chamberlain explained several years later, was to impress on the Boers the fact that we meant to pursue the matter to an end. In debate five weeks after the celebrated 'bluff' interview, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman still declared that he could see nothing whatever which furnished a case for armed intervention, but Mr. Chamberlain raised the controversy far above franchise details, and treating it as a question of our predominance in South Africa, used language which even a Unionist critic described as a menace. He said the Government had taken up the cause of the Uitlanders and were 'bound to see it through,' and while they intended to exhaust conciliatory methods, they would not tie their hands by any pledge as to ulterior measures. Language of similar portent was used at the same time by Lord Salisbury. Even at this date, however, the Minister most directly responsible declared he was hopeful of a settlement, and the press, as a rule, counselled prudence.

The prospect darkened on the last day of the session, August 9. Provoked by a Nationalist who spoke in sympathy with the Boers, Mr. Chamberlain addressed to them a plainer threat than he had hitherto given. 'We say that our predominance is menaced by the action of the Transvaal in refusing to redress grievances, and in refusing even any consideration of the requests made in moderate language by the suzerain Power. This is a state of things which cannot longer

be tolerated. We have stated that we have put our hands to the plough, and we will not draw back.' The danger of such a declaration was obvious to everybody, and yet observers noted that it was cheered in a marked manner by other Ministers on the Treasury bench. Members of Parliament separated with forebodings as to the future, but still the hope was expressed that peace would be preserved. New franchise regulations had been offered by the Transvaal Government; Mr. Chamberlain had proposed a Joint Committee of Inquiry with reference to the effect of the concessions; alternative proposals came from Pretoria, negotiations were carried on by the High Commissioner, and an answer sent from Downing Street on August 16 was regarded as a qualified acceptance. It was believed that in view of his expressed horror of a racial war the Colonial Secretary would resort to every expedient to secure an honourable pacific arrangement.

From a political picnic at Highbury, on August 26, however, the Minister who was then free from the control of Parliament sent forth a challenge which resounded through the world. He and his wife strolled down to a field and during a break in the sports he delivered a speech in which he reverted to those picturesque phrases of the new diplomacy which had startled the adherents of the older school. 'Mr. Kruger procrastinates in his reply. He dribbles out reforms like water from a squeezed sponge. . . . The issues of peace and of war are in the hands of President Kruger and his advisers. . . . Will he speak the necessary words? The sands are running down in the glass.' On being denounced for this language, the Colonial Secretary explained that it was intended not to be provocative but to be plain, and when he was reminded of it when the war was over he stated that he adopted the metaphor of the sandglass on the spur of the moment as an illustration which he did not mean to be offensive. It was, however, regarded as provocative at the time it was uttered, and while the plainness of the picnic speech was quite understood at Pretoria it failed to frighten the Boers.

The controversy on the franchise reads now as if it were a mere pretext to conceal a deeper cause of quarrel. In almost every dispatch allusion was introduced to the suzerainty. President Kruger tried to obtain a practical abandonment of the suzerainty and on the other hand Mr. Chamberlain paraded it—as his opponents held—with a challenging persistency. While the Boers were pretending to be alarmed for their independence, we were expressing fear for our position in South Africa. Mr. Chamberlain's suggestion that a conference between the President and the High Commissioner should take place at Capetown, and that various matters of difference besides the franchise should receive consideration, drew a stiff reply from Pretoria.

Ministers were brought back from their holiday resorts to a Cabinet Council on September 8; an intimation was sent to the Transvaal that in a certain contingency Her Majesty's Government would formulate their own proposals; after the Boer reply they met again, on September 22, and they were 'now compelled to consider the matter afresh, and to formulate their own proposals for the settlement of the issues which had been created in South Africa by the policy constantly followed during many years by the Government of the South African Republic.' No sign of yielding being given at Pretoria the Cabinet assembled for its final decision on the 29th.

A crowd of spectators, as at every political crisis, watched the arrival of the Ministers at Downing Street. It was recorded that Mr. Chamberlain 'betrayed no signs of anxiety as he alertly jumped from a cab, puffing a big cigar. His manner indicated the absence of any fears in the world; an orchid adorned his coat and the inevitable eyeglass was in position. He was greeted with hearty cheering, and this was repeated when, with a red dispatch-box in his hand, he entered the Colonial Office.' At the fateful meeting the Government agreed to the draft of the dispatch embodying their final proposals; it was announced that Parliament would be summoned shortly; and on October 7 a proclamation was issued calling out the reserves. The threatened proposals never saw the light. They were superseded by events. If the Government were still engaged in bluff, the risky game failed. On October 9 the Boers issued an ultimatum which rendered war inevitable. President Kruger, with his powder dry, appealed to the God of Battles. And 'with all reverence and gravity'—declared his chief antagonist—'we accept the appeal, believing that we have our quarrel just.'

When Mr. Chamberlain entered the House of Commons at the meeting of Parliament on October 17 he was greeted by the Unionists with a loud, prolonged cheer. Many of them cordially and even effusively shook hands with him. In certain circles the war was popular. On the other hand, charges of provocation and recklessness were brought against the Colonial Secretary by political opponents, and henceforth the most bitter recriminations of his life chequered his career. Sir William Harcourt complained on the earliest opportunity of his exasperating notes and irritating utterances, and particularly of his speech at the picnic. Emphatic assertion, however, was made by Mr. Chamberlain of his peaceful intentions. On the 19th he spoke for two hours and three-quarters with great energy and vigour; and it was noted as a feat of physical endurance that he tasted not a sip of water or wine, nor required any other refreshment. He declared that from the first day he came into office he strove for peace, and that down even to the most recent period he believed in

it. He admitted that when the Boer ultimatum was issued the Government were endeavouring to strengthen their forces in South Africa, but he said they expected when this had been done to have resumed negotiations with a better chance of success. 'We never contemplated taking the offensive.' This assurance he repeated on many occasions, and months after the outbreak of hostilities he continued to declare 'we hoped for peace almost to the very end.'

Responsibility for the war was attributed to the Colonial Secretary by his opponents. Their leader contended that it was the natural result of his persistent policy, and Sir William Harcourt on every occasion expressed the opinion that it might have been avoided by different diplomacy. On the other hand, after it broke out Mr. Chamberlain and his colleagues asserted that it had been inevitable. Thereupon they were charged with a want of foresight. Why, if war was inevitable, did they go on professing their belief in peace; why did they not take military precautions; why did they allow their diplomacy to run so fast? The answer was that the inevitability of the war was revealed only by the ultimatum and the armed efficiency of the Boers. It was then, and only then seen, according to the Unionists, that the Transvaal had been preparing to challenge our position in South Africa, and that the struggle for the paramountcy was bound to come.

Disasters in the field gave point to the indictment for want of energy, foresight and judgment, which was brought against the Government early in 1900. The argument in the keen, protracted controversy might be summed up as follows—

UNIONISTS—The war was the result of the Boer ultimatum.

LIBERALS—The ultimatum was the reply to the calling out of the reserves.

UNIONISTS—The war was inevitable.

LIBERALS—Then why did you not prepare for it?

UNIONISTS—Because we hoped till the very end for peace.

LIBERALS—Therefore, according to your own discovery, you mistook the situation.

UNIONISTS—It was a natural and unavoidable mistake: we could not have known that the Boers were determined to challenge our supremacy by force of arms.

LIBERALS—But why did you threaten a war-like race when your force in South Africa was inadequate?

UNIONISTS—Our conduct showed we desired to exhaust every means of maintaining peace. Moreover, your own leader declared that there was no necessity for warlike preparations.

LIBERALS—What we said was that there was no case for armed intervention. If you believed that there was a case for armed intervention, you ought to have prepared for it.

Thus recrimination went on at home while Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener, who were sent out after others had failed, were reorganizing the forces in South Africa. Mr. Chamberlain for a time showed signs of worry in his appearance. His face lost the youthful

look which it had maintained so long, and his hair revealed threads of grey. But he never abandoned confidence nor wavered in determination. Debate on February 5 took the form of almost a personal attack. Sir William Harcourt taunted him with having formerly been 'the protagonist and champion' of the policy of Boer independence. 'You have no right to say that,' he exclaimed; but Sir William insisted on telling the House that Mr. Chamberlain was selected to state the policy of the Liberal Government in 1881, because he was so earnest a believer in retrocession. When he replied to his critics not a seat was empty; and peers, crowded out of their gallery, stood at the top of their staircase for an hour. His defence was flamboyant, but expressed the proud spirit of the country. 'What other nation in the world?' was the refrain of a series of his sentences. Abandoning early illusions, he made a 'never again' declaration which became familiar in controversy—

Speaking for the Government, I say that so far as in us lies there shall be no second Majuba. Never again with our consent, while we have the power, shall the Boers be able to erect in the heart of South Africa a citadel from whence proceed disaffection and race animosities. Never again shall they be able to endanger the paramountcy of Great Britain. Never again shall they be able to treat an Englishman as if he belonged to an inferior race.

No confession of error in diplomacy or policy could be dragged from Mr. Chamberlain. His dispatches and speeches were in vain raised up against him as a reproach. 'What would he not give for the chance of editing them to-day?' asked Mr. Asquith. 'I would not alter a word,' defiantly answered the unrepentant Minister, whereupon Mr. Asquith retorted that if he were in his place he would give a great deal to have the chance of erasing an epithet here and expunging a metaphor there. The old story of the Raid was revived on February 20 and another attempt made by the Radicals to discredit the statesman to whom there was so much personal antagonism. A great deal was said about suspicion. Insinuations were scattered through speeches, and a dignified Conservative complained that personal rancour was the motive of the debate. Mr. Chamberlain replied with passionate feeling, treating the attack as part of a conspiracy against his own reputation. As usual he defied his assailants. 'Let them do their worst,' he cried, as he flung forth his arms with a challenge to the world. So far as the Raid was concerned Sir William Harcourt dissociated himself from the imputations cast on him by others. Sir William's theory was that Mr. Rhodes and his agents had endeavoured to cover their own guilt by asserting the complicity of the Colonial Office.

Although there was a loss of Government prestige, which Mr. Chamberlain shared, during the military defeats, the victories which

were secured when Lord Roberts took the field speedily restored the popularity of the Ministers and strengthened the martial sentiment in the country. All who opposed the war policy were denounced as pro-Boers. A considerable section of the Opposition did what was possible to prevent it from being turned into a party issue. While complaining of the manner in which the negotiations had been conducted, and also of the military unpreparedness, they concurred in describing the war as just; and with few exceptions the Liberals agreed in voting the necessary supplies. Mr. Chamberlain contended, however, that the sympathy of the 'pro-Boers' increased our difficulties and prolonged the struggle. Now that it was in progress he treated it with a lighter heart than he had shown in 1896, when he said such a conflict would leave behind it embers which generations would hardly be long enough to distinguish. On being reminded of this prediction, he said in July, 1900, that with greater knowledge he was more hopeful. 'Now that the misunderstanding of the English character and the English power had been removed by the war, the probability was that after a short time the Boers would settle down to a condition of things in which certainly they would not have anything to complain of.' By this time the enemy had been driven back beyond our frontiers, and we had occupied their capitals, but when a section of Radicals pressed for a settlement on the ground that we had established our supremacy, the Government insisted on submission, and the popular feeling in England was on the side of the Ministerial policy.

There were Jingo processions and manifestations in the streets; Mr. Rudyard Kipling's plea for the soldier, 'The Absent-minded Beggar,' was vociferously applauded in music-halls; Lord Roberts and Mr. Chamberlain were the national heroes, and a stop-the-war meeting could scarcely be held with safety. A new word was added to the language by the revelry which took place in London on May 19 in honour of the relief of the long-besieged and gallant little Mafeking. From morning till midnight crowds paraded some of the great thoroughfares. Scarcely any business was done in the City, and not much shopping anywhere. The only thriving trade was in red, white and blue. Even City men and smart young women carried little flags. Once in their lives they threw reserve to the winds and joined in public jollity. Everybody and everything displayed the national colours—houses, horses, dogs, omnibuses, cycles, whips, men, women and children; and when banners went out of fashion or out of stock, the young folk carried tri-coloured windmills and peacocks' feathers. There were ties, handkerchiefs and cockades in red, white and blue, and grave citizens paraded their patriotism by thus adorning their silk hats. The noisy demonstration was joined in by all classes—by

clubmen and costers, by East and West. Stockbrokers and clerks, assembled in front of the Mansion House, sang khaki songs; the crowd between the Bank and Piccadilly grew as the day advanced; all sorts of musical instruments were used to vary the shouting, singing and cheering; kissing became promiscuous; and young men of fashion danced in the streets with flower girls. This was 'mafficking.' It was repeated when Pretoria was captured in June; and Mr. Chamberlain was the idol. Thousands of handkerchiefs and banners displayed his photograph.

A brief interlude in the war controversies was provided in 1900 by the Bill for Australian federation. It raised delicate questions between the Colonial delegates and the Government; and their settlement—as Mr. Asquith said—reflected equal honour on both parties. Even Mr. Healy declared that Mr. Chamberlain's action in connexion with it showed 'a great deal of genius.' Such praise from such a critic was praise indeed. It was a pleasant relief for a moment, though only for a moment, from the tornado of contention and acrimony.

To foreign criticism on the war the Colonial Secretary replied with a proud defiance which expressed the national feeling. He found consolation for his country in the words of Byron that—

He who surpasses or subdues mankind
Must look down on the hate of those below.

A dangerous, although a natural, sentiment in international controversy, it was applauded most noisily by those who felt most keenly the humiliation of the early reverses which success had failed to obliterate from the memory.

XXXII

THE KHAKI ELECTION

IN the autumn of 1900, soon after the annexation of the Transvaal and the flight of Mr. Kruger, when the war feeling was enthusiastic and the khaki uniform excited strong emotion, the Government appealed to the country at a General Election. They were denounced very hotly by Liberals in the parliamentary debates which preceded the dissolution for taking advantage of a patriotic sentiment and the anger which their tactics aroused was increased by the manner in which they tried to expose their opponents to odium. 'You may call us pro-Boers; you may call us traitors,' scornfully said Sir Wilfrid Lawson as he took solace in Lowell's lines—

Call me coward, call me traitor,
Just ez suits your mean ideas;
Here I stand a tyrant-hater,
An' the friend o' God an' Peace!

All, however, who opposed the Ministerial policy were not so indifferent as Sir Wilfrid to what they considered misrepresentation. Liberals whose sons and brothers were fighting against the Boers naturally resented the suggestion that they were less patriotic than other politicians, and there was on the Opposition side a feeling of passionate annoyance at the khaki uniform being treated as a sort of party symbol.

Mr. Chamberlain, who was shrewdly suspected to be the inspirer of the Election, incurred special opprobrium by his method of conducting it. He was likened by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman to Paul Pry for making use of private letters from three Liberal members which had been found in the Boer archives. To these documents he alluded in the closing days of the expiring Parliament, and copies were sent to the writers with an inquiry as to whether they had any observations or explanations to offer. Mr. Labouchere, anticipating official action, printed the letters he had written to the agent for the Transvaal during the negotiations which preceded the war, and much amusement was caused by his remark in one of them that Mr. Kruger had 'a great opportunity to give Joe another fall.' The letters of the three members were issued as a parliamentary paper and did some prejudice to the Liberal cause.

Credit for the close of the war was claimed by the Unionists. They relied on Lord Roberts's statement that it was practically over. 'We have reached the final stage in a great war,' wrote Mr. Chamberlain in his address to the electors of West Birmingham. 'Now that the war is over,' he said at Coventry on October 1. Subsequently, after it had been continued through many weary and anxious months and he was reproached with having misled the country, he pleaded that when the Transvaal was formally annexed the Government thought the struggle was practically at an end. It was on this assumption that he and his colleagues appealed to the country. His view of the principal issues of the election was presented adroitly and clearly. 'They are,' as he wrote to a candidate, 'the merits of the war and the nature of the settlement which is to insure us against any recurrence of the danger to our possessions in South Africa, and to the prestige of the empire at large, which we have lately had to encounter. At such a time I feel certain that you will have the support of every Unionist and of all patriotic Liberals who place the good of the country above any partisan interests.'

'A seat lost to the Government is a seat sold to the Boers.' A telegram from Mr. Chamberlain with these words became the battle-cry. It provoked indignant protests from Liberals, and the electioneer explained that the words he used were the words of the mayor of Mafeking: 'a seat lost to the Government is a seat gained by the Boers,' and that 'sold to' the Boers was a telegraphic error for which he received an apology from the Post Office.¹ The message in its most pungent form was not too strong for the khaki candidates who made effective use of it in appealing to the patriotic fervour of the electors. They tried to ignore every issue except the questions connected with the war. Their contention was that the Unionist Government alone could be trusted to carry it through and secure a 'never again' settlement; and in defence of the dissolution being taken at such a crisis it was asserted that the Liberals were not agreed as to the justice of the war, and that a clear decision by the country was necessary in order that its fruits might be gathered.

Complete renunciation of his early views was made at this period by Mr. Chamberlain. A year previously on being reminded that he was a member of the Cabinet which agreed to the Convention after Majuba, he said, 'I am not certain that I was right.' Now he became certain that he was wrong. Speaking at Birmingham on September 23, 1900, he referred to the events of 1881—'What happened then? I was in the Government—I had only just entered it, but I was in

¹ The telegram, addressed to the *Bury Guardian*, was handed in by Mr. Chamberlain's private secretary at a suburban office in Birmingham, and a facsimile of the message as he wrote it was published after the election.

the Government which gave back the independence of the Transvaal after Majuba. *It was a disastrous mistake.* When Mr. Chamberlain said he had only just entered the Government in 1881 he must have meant that he had not been in an earlier Administration. So far as that Government was concerned, he had been in it from its formation. He based his complete change of view in 1900 on the discovery that the object of the Boers was to get rid of the British power in South Africa, but his repudiation of a policy of which he had been the most eloquent champion added bitterness to the reproaches of Liberals.

Braggadocio and vanity were attributed to him by his leading opponents. Sir William Harcourt, who was never better pleased with himself than when chaffing his friend, said that in regard to our relations with the colonies Mr. Chamberlain seemed to entertain the conviction that he was Captain Cook and General Wolfe rolled into one and that he had discovered Australia and stormed the heights of Quebec. His language was compared to that of Sir Anthony Absolute in *The Rivals*. He 'was intoxicated by his own vanity'; and 'he became worse every day. He fancied he was everybody and had done everything.' In a bitter tone Sir William taunted him with having gone out of the social-progress business and devoted himself to the pursuit of war. Mr. Chamberlain replied that they had not done with old age pensions. 'I am not dead yet,' he cried. It was, however, on the war issue that, meanwhile, he concentrated attention.

Another election was thus won, chiefly by the efforts of Mr. Chamberlain, for his friends and Tory allies. He was the inspiring force in the contest, as he had been in others. He threw himself into it with as much zeal and vigour as he showed in previous appeals to the country, speaking almost every night for three weeks in the Midlands, and again giving an impulse to the whole Unionist party. The khaki cry was used irresistibly. The coalition began a second lease of power with a majority of 134.

Very angry feeling was displayed by the new Parliament, which met in December, 1900. Liberals were greatly irritated by the manner in which the election had been conducted, by the misrepresentation of opponents of the Government as 'little Englanders' and 'friends of every country but their own,' and by the unauthorized publication of private letters. Against this proceeding Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman hotly protested. A similar act in private life, he said, would exclude a man from honourable society. 'I deeply regret,' retorted Mr. Chamberlain, 'that I am cut off from the society of the right honourable gentlemen—which I never enjoyed.' Wounds caused by such hasty words left scars.

Another practice of which Liberals complained was the continued use of the phrase 'pro-Boer.' In February, 1901, Sir Robert Reid,

the future Lord Chancellor, resented its employment by the Colonial Secretary as very offensive. 'Then I willingly withdraw it,' said Mr. Chamberlain. He could not, however, give it up altogether. It was in his opinion an apt description of some of his opponents. When Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman denounced the school of parliamentary manners in which he was called a pro-Boer the leader of that school defended it. Alluding to the imaginary person who thought that the Boers were always right and that his own country was always wrong, Mr. Chamberlain said: 'To my mind such a man is a pro-Boer and, despite the objection of the right honourable gentleman, I for one shall continue to call him so.'

Certain prominent Liberals declined to meet Mr. Chamberlain for some time after the election at any social function. Queen Victoria, however, received him at Osborne, and the Prince of Wales attended a non-political banquet over which he presided. Mr. Asquith, who gave a general support to the war, although he disapproved of much that the Government had done and of what they had left undone before it became inevitable, was Mr. Chamberlain's fellow guest at Chatsworth, ere the scars left by the election controversies had been healed, but the relations between the minister and most of the occupants of the front Opposition bench were for a considerable period very strained.

A 'dreary flow of petty malignity' was complained of by Mr. Chamberlain. How far he gave provocation was a question on which partisans could not agree. Liberals considered that he had hit below the belt and that his conduct was unworthy of a gentleman. He in turn spoke of a conspiracy of slander and of insinuation and was specially annoyed by the allegation that he was fattening on profits made out of a war which he had provoked—that he was doing so by his connection with companies and through relatives interested in Government contracts. When he stated the facts in the House the bubble burst. He declared that he had never been asked to use, and had never used, his influence in order to secure pecuniary gain for himself or his relatives in any improper way; and speaking with emotion, he made the boast recorded in the first chapter of this book that his family had 'an unbroken record, of nearly two centuries of unstained commercial integrity and honour.' General sympathy was felt with him in his personal vindication although Liberals laughed at Mr. Balfour's effusive statement that he never stood higher in the opinion of his countrymen than now.

Another oft-told tale was entirely discredited when repeated in the House. The tale was as follows: Mr. Alan de Tatton Egerton when out in South Africa had a conversation with Mr. Rhodes, who told him that Mr. Chamberlain was up to the neck in the Raid. When Mr.

Egerton came home he informed the Prime Minister of what he had heard and afterwards at Lord Salisbury's request he repeated the statement in the hearing of Mr. Chamberlain, whose only comment upon it, was to cry 'Traitor ! Traitor ! Traitor !' This was the story which spread from the Lobby to the platform. Unfortunately for its life, an Irish member introduced it into debate. He told it in a dramatic manner. 'Absurd !' cried the Colonial Secretary, on hearing the story, and when he was challenged to give a denial, he declared that there was not a particle of truth in it. Little more was heard of the tale.

Queen Victoria, a lover of peace, ended her reign while the black cloud still lay over the land, and King Edward inherited a kingdom with a military and administrative reputation at stake. 'The war in South Africa has not yet entirely terminated,' said His Majesty in his first speech from the throne on February 14, 1901, a few weeks after Lord Roberts's return to England. During its continuance there was a constant quarrel between Liberal leaders and uncompromising Ministers. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannermann accused Mr. Chamberlain of intolerable arrogance and the latter retorted by charging Sir Henry with intolerable folly and describing him as a political wobbler, who had elevated the art to the level of an exact science. This was a specimen of the style of controversy which was common in the first year of the new reign.

There were frequent debates not only on farm burning and concentration camps, but also on the means of terminating the war and on the terms which the victors were prepared to offer. Early in 1901 Mr. Chamberlain stated that on peace being obtained, His Majesty's advisers would be ready to grant some form of crown colony government, but he resolutely refused to promise self-government immediately, and as to independence 'it is no use arguing with us on the subject.' Negotiations in March between Lord Kitchener and General Botha were unsuccessful, and Mr. Chamberlain's intervention was considered by Liberals to have been the cause of their failure. He was charged with a policy of subjugation and extermination. On the other hand, he quoted the admissions of Boer generals that they were fighting for their independence.

XXXIII

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S ASCENDENCY

YOU should be king,' cried a Nationalist to Mr. Chamberlain in 1902. 'That is not my ambition,' he retorted with the airy confidence of the man who knows whither he is going and is sure of reaching the goal. Anti-war Liberals were urging that the Colonial Secretary and Lord Milner, as the chief obstacles to peace, should be removed from their positions. 'How are you to do it?' asked the quizzing Lord Rosebery. In those days the Government without Mr. Chamberlain would have been like the play of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. His ascendancy was universally recognized. Conservatives admitted that he was the strongest member of the Ministry as well as the most powerful politician in the country.

In the House of Commons he was the pivot of controversy, and the observed of the least observant. When he entered members watched his movements, and strangers who had been languid and lounging, became erect and eager, as if a new interest had come into their life, and when he went out the proceedings dwindled in interest. At railway stations and in Downing Street and the approaches to Westminster, men waited to cheer him as they had waited for the great Gladstone. With a new lease of power, and with two new colonies to his credit, hope and ambition were revived in his eager, restless life. He looked almost as keen as he was twenty years previously, and his gait seemed as buoyant and brisk.

A quarrel with the German Chancellor increased his fame. He had expressed distrust of Russian diplomacy; he had admonished France to mend her manners, and now he turned on the country for whose alliance he had pleaded. The quarrel sprang out of a reference to the Prussian army. Germans, as well as other foreign peoples, had tried the patience of Englishmen and Scotsmen by their insulting charges against our troops in South Africa, and Mr. Chamberlain, in stating that it might be necessary to adopt measures of greater severity in dealing with the Boers who were now carrying on guerilla warfare, said 'if that time comes we can find precedents for anything that we may do in the action of those nations who now criticise our "barbarity" and "cruelty," but whose example in Poland, in the Caucasus, in

Almeria, in Tongkong, in Bosnia, in the Franco-German War we have never even approached.'

To this statement Count von Bülow replied at the opening of the Reichstag on January 8, 1902. In a lecturing tone he said that 'when a minister considers himself called upon to justify his policy, he does well to leave foreign countries out of the discussion. Should he, however, wish to adduce examples from abroad, it is advisable that he should proceed with great caution, for otherwise he runs the risk, not only of being misunderstood, but also of hurting foreign feelings, even though it be—as I am ready to assume was the case in the present instance, and as indeed after assurances made to me from the other side, I must assume—without any intention of doing so.' The Chancellor remarked that the German army stood much too high—its escutcheon was too bright—for it to be affected by warped judgments. Anything of this kind, he added, was well answered by Frederick the Great when he was told that somebody had been attacking him and the Prussian army: 'Let the man alone and don't excite yourselves; he is biting at granite.'

It was contrary to Mr. Chamberlain's principles in political life to turn the cheek to the smiter. When struck, he always struck back. He had an opportunity within three days, at the Silversmiths' Dinner at Birmingham, of dealing with his German censor, and he made dramatic use of the opportunity. His tone was defiant. 'What I have said, I have said.¹ I withdraw nothing, and qualify nothing. I defend nothing. As I read history, no British Minister has ever served his country faithfully and at the same time enjoyed popularity abroad. . . . I do not want to give lessons to a foreign minister, and I will not accept any at his hands. I am responsible only to my own Sovereign and my own countrymen.'

This bold answer resounded through the world. It was endorsed by many of the speaker's opponents at home. The doctrine that no British statesman who served his country faithfully enjoyed popularity abroad was a dangerous doctrine which in ordinary times would have shocked the moral instinct of the nation, but in those days when we were isolated and sensitive it was allowed to pass without much protest. People realized that a minister of the Crown had been unjustly attacked by a foreign ruler and had given a reply worthy of the national pride. 'What I have said, I have said,' was the text of many bantering articles, but for a time it added to Mr. Chamberlain's prestige.

As soon as Parliament met, questions were asked with reference to the 'assurances' which, according to Count von Bülow, had been offered to Germany. Mr. Balfour denied that any assurances had been asked for, but stated that in an unofficial conversation the Foreign Secretary

¹ *Quod dixi, dixi* (the motto of the Dixie family).

pointed out to the ambassador that no charges of barbarity were brought against the German or any other army. He added that in the opinion of the Government, nothing required to be said in the direction of either qualifying or withdrawing the Colonial Secretary's speech. Unionists greeted this declaration with a loud, emphatic cheer. Liberals dreaded Mr. Chamberlain's excursions from his own sphere into that of foreign relations, but even Lord Rosebery, while deprecating his dialectics, admitted that his answer was 'a proper answer to give.'

His popularity in the City of London was proved during a visit he paid to the Guildhall to receive an address from the Corporation a month after his quarrel with the German Chancellor. No statesman since the time of Lord Beaconsfield had excited so much enthusiasm in that Jingo centre. The city was not particularly fond of Mr. Gladstone, and although it admired Lord Salisbury it was out of touch with his temperament. Nor was Mr. Balfour at this time quite its ideal; he did not know enough about business, and did not throw sufficient glamour over his short-comings. On the other hand Mr. Chamberlain's methods as well as his maxims appealed to the men at the centre of the world's commerce, and nowhere was the war more heartily supported than in the region of the Mansion House and the Stock Exchange. His reception was royal. Men and women crowded the pavements and looked down from every window, and waved hats and handkerchiefs. In the Guildhall he was hailed with equal enthusiasm, and his speech was in the spirit of the time.

In the numerous debates on the war in 1902, as a critic remarked, Mr. Chamberlain's 'incontestable ascendancy bore down all before it by his moderation not less than by his energy.' Almost every week he was called on to justify some part of his policy. While 'a sort of war'—as Lord Chancellor Halsbury described the struggle—was carried on by the indomitable Boers, the Liberals exhorted the Government to make peace, and they expressed the opinion that it could be arranged on honourable terms. 'If the Boers wish for peace,' replied Lord Salisbury, 'let them come and tell us.' In the same temper Mr. Chamberlain declared that he would not receive representations from Kruger and his entourage then in Europe, nor from the perambulating Governments in South Africa. He added, however, that he would not be deaf to any reasonable overtures which might come from a reasonable authority; he disavowed a policy of extermination, and gave the assurance that when peace was restored a very large amnesty would be granted. Critics had prepared a terrible attack, but in the flattering judgment of Mr. Balfour, his speech 'knocked everybody out of time,' while a humbler admirer marvelled at 'the bitter and venomous aspersions aimed at the Colonial Secretary and the magnificent manner in which he repelled them.'

A visit of the Dutch Prime Minister to this country excited lively curiosity. As Lord Rosebery conjectured, he did not come to see the 'old masters.' The Dutch Government, after feeling their way, inquired whether we would make use of the good offices of a neutral Power in opening negotiations, and it was suggested that safe conducts should be granted to the Boer delegates who were in Europe to enable them to proceed to South Africa and confer with their generals in the field. His Majesty's advisers adhered to the decision expressed earlier in the war to decline the intervention of any foreign Power, and they pointed out that the quickest and most satisfactory plan would be for the hostile commanders to communicate directly with Lord Kitchener. Agreeably to the wishes of the Liberal leaders, who had been urging that we should make our intentions known, the correspondence was sent to him with instructions to forward it to the Boer generals. Facilities were given for the latter to confer together, and subsequently for the commandoes to meet. Thus an opening was made for peace, but the deliberations of our gallant foes were protracted, and in the meantime the 'sort of war' continued; new contrivances for ending it were resorted to in the field and old controversies were revived with undiminished violence in the House of Commons.

Acrimony accompanied Mr. Chamberlain's appearance in debate on every topic. The greater his power and popularity grew the more persistent was the criticism of his opponents. Even on so safe a subject as the dinner-hour in connection with new rules of procedure, passion was excited. 'I dine in the House,' remarked an Irishman in arguing that there was no necessity for a long adjournment. Thereupon Mr. Chamberlain said there were members who found they could get a dinner in the House cheaper than anywhere else. (There was, in fact, a dinner of several courses for one shilling). His remark was resented as a gibe at poverty, and it provoked a furious outburst. 'Very insolent!' screamed Mr. Dillon, but the offender protested that he had meant no discourtesy. A fearless cynic on his own side took occasion to hurl a personal gibe at him. Recalling that George IV. was said to be the first gentleman in Europe, Mr. Gibson Bowles remarked that Mr. Chamberlain was 'undoubtedly the first gentleman in Birmingham.'

A violent scene took place on March 20, in the course of a debate in which the Colonial Secretary minimised the fear he formerly expressed that the war would leave racial ill-feeling behind it. He referred to a letter from Vilonel, a Boer general. 'Vilonel is a traitor,' cried Mr. Dillon. A retort followed from Mr. Chamberlain like a flash. 'Ah!' he said, 'the honourable member is a good judge of traitors.' Amid uproar, the Nationalist appealed to the Speaker against this insinuation, but Mr. Gully refused to rule the words out of order. 'Then all I

have got to say,' shouted Mr. Dillon, 'is that the right honourable gentleman is a damned liar !' Naturally he was directed to withdraw so improper an expression. 'I cannot,' he coolly replied amid the cheers of friends, and accordingly he was named and suspended. Mr. Chamberlain waited till the incident closed. 'I was saying when I was interrupted,' he began as he calmly resumed his speech. A couple of months later Lord Rosebery, remembering that he had been permitted to describe Mr. Dillon as a good judge of traitors, remarked in the same genial spirit that the member for West Birmingham was 'a good judge of recantation.'

At last the Boers yielded. On Sunday, June 1, the War Office which had for several years sent forth dismal tidings issued the joyful news that the document containing the terms of surrender had been signed at Pretoria. At St. Paul's the intimation was read from the pulpit after the sermon at the evening service. The faces of the congregation lit up with gratitude; the hymn 'Now thank we all our God' was sung solemnly, and after the benediction the vast congregation joined in the National Anthem. Next day the whole country rejoiced. There was a renewal of 'mafficking' in London, and so closely did the enthusiastic crowds press upon Mr. Chamberlain as he arrived at the Colonial Office that he had difficulty in passing from his carriage. On the following Sunday King Edward and Queen Alexandra attended a thanksgiving service at St. Paul's which expressed the feelings of a united kingdom. It was with a sense of profound relief and gratitude that the people received the announcement of peace. They were not disposed to look too narrowly at the terms. The important matter was that the Boers had surrendered; and few, even of the Jingoës, regretted that in the conditions generosity was blended with justice. Mr. Chamberlain was at this point credited with statesmanship by Radicals as well as by Unionists.

One of the terms of the agreement was that military administration in the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies should at the earliest possible date be succeeded by civil government, and as soon as circumstances permitted representative institutions leading up to self-government should be introduced.¹ A sum of three millions was granted to assist in restoring the Boers to their homes. When their generals visited England a few months later they surprised the Colonial Secretary by the number and character of the subjects on which they wished a fresh conference. He received them only on the understanding that they would not raise any point inconsistent with the settlement of Pretoria.

¹ The Liberal Administration on obtaining power in 1906 decided to replace the then existing crown colony government by responsible government without an intermediate stage.

XXXIV

A NEW CHIEF

ON July 7, 1902, Mr. Chamberlain was driving in a hansom along Whitehall when the horse fell near the Canadian arch erected in honour of King Edward's coronation, and being thrown violently against the glass screen, which came down, he received a deep scalp wound over his right temple. He was conveyed to Charing Cross Hospital where he remained two days. The wound kept him from his Parliamentary duties for three weeks and in the opinion of some of his friends the shock caused a permanent injury.

By a strange destiny the most ambitious statesman in England was confined to his room when the Prime Ministership became vacant. The termination of the war was a fitting occasion for Lord Salisbury to lay down the burden of which, like a great ancestor, he had become very weary, but there had been a general expectation that he would bear it until the coronation. Much surprise was caused even in high Liberal Unionist quarters when he resigned a bare month before the splendid ceremony which took place on August 9. King Edward sent at once for the leader of the House of Commons, and forthwith Mr. Balfour called on the Colonial Secretary at Prince's Gardens. He was entitled to expect his support. Two years previously, at a banquet of the Liberal Union Club, Mr. Chamberlain said Mr. Balfour's colleagues found it a privilege to be associated with him, and would find it an honour to serve under him. Much, however, had happened since that assurance was given, and Mr. Chamberlain had become more powerful.

A considerable section of the younger Conservatives as well as the Liberal Unionists might have preferred if Mr. Balfour had said to the older statesman: 'To you is the credit of our success, and to you must fall the reward.' That statesman himself may have felt that he had claims to the chief place. No indication, however, was given then, nor has been given since that Mr. Balfour repeated Lord Salisbury's offer to stand aside in favour of a Liberal Unionist colleague. Only one course in the circumstances was open to Mr. Chamberlain. The support which he volunteered in 1900 he now undertook to render.

To a meeting of the Unionist party held on July 14, three days

after Lord Salisbury's resignation, Mr. Austen Chamberlain conveyed from his father a message which was described as not only cordial but affectionate, stating 'with what pride and pleasure' he would give all assistance in his power to the new Prime Minister. Members were convinced of the sincerity of the message, and it removed from some minds a doubt which had previously existed as to the prospects of the Cecil succession. The Duke of Devonshire, who might many years previously have filled the highest place, modestly and gratefully undertook the leadership of the House of Lords, but Mr. Balfour lost the assistance not only of Lord James of Hereford, one of the most Liberal of the Unionists, but also of that staunch and experienced Conservative Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who, as Parliament learned subsequently, had not received sufficient encouragement in his policy as Chancellor of the Exchequer. A compliment was paid to the Colonial Secretary by the admission of the son of whom he was so proud to the Cabinet.

He had sufficiently recovered from the cab accident to reappear in the House of Commons on July 29 for a colonial discussion. There was a long scar on his forehead, but a critic declared with satisfaction that the accident had not impaired his qualities of force, precision and lucidity. For the moment the hearts of his opponents were softened, and his own heart responded to their warmth. His reception was remarkably cordial. Liberals as well as Unionists cheered him, both when he took his seat on the Treasury bench beside the new Prime Minister, and when he rose to answer a question; and congratulations on his recovery were offered in the most kindly manner by the leader of the Opposition. Amid the applause of the whole House, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman expressed the great pleasure which members felt in seeing him again in his place. Mr. Chamberlain acknowledged the compliment with equal cordiality, and was so amiable as to say that the House honoured his antagonist as a strenuous partisan who never allowed political controversy to degenerate into personal animosity.

Many of the observers familiar with Mr. Chamberlain's career believed that he was disappointed. Their belief was based on the assumption that ambition was his strongest motive, and also on a recognition of the unequalled services he had rendered to the Unionist party. Sincere as was his friendship for Mr. Balfour, doubt was felt as to whether he was satisfied with the elevation merely of his son. Admirers and followers whispered that he was the greater statesman and deserved the highest reward. Some of them thought that Mr. Balfour might at least have gone to the Upper House, and left to his colleague the leadership of the Commons.

If those feelings were in Mr. Chamberlain's own breast he did not

betray them in his public words. Compliments were exchanged by the two statesmen at a banquet in honour of the new Prime Minister at the Mansion House. 'I congratulate him from my heart,' said the Colonial Secretary, 'on the great position he has earned, which is deservedly his by his character and by his talents.' Mr. Chamberlain's eulogies when given at all are not in the least stinted, and on this occasion he applied to his chief the flattering lines of Pope's epistle to Mr. Addison :—

Statesman, yet friend to truth ! of soul sincere,
In action faithful, and in honour clear ;
Who broke no promise, serv'd no private end,
Who gain'd no title, and who lost no friend.

It was difficult for Mr. Balfour to cap this compliment, but he proved equal to the emergency. He declared that his colleague had done more for the British empire than any holder of his office had ever done before.

The year 1902 was not an agreeable one for Mr. Chamberlain. Although his fame and power had reached the highest point he suffered taunts which were hard to bear on his support of the new corn duty, with regard to which he could not yet disclose his ultimate aims ; and easily as he might bury his past it was a strain upon him to assent to an Education Bill which completed the clerical reaction. The giving of extra grants to the denominational schools was now to be supplemented by rate aid, and to effect this purpose in the first year of the new Prime Ministership, Parliament was summoned to sit late in the autumn. 'The time is coming,' said Mr. Chamberlain at this period, 'when the question of whether or not I continue in public life is a matter of absolute indifference to me.' Such language when used by a man of ardent, strenuous temperament, deepened the suspicion that he was discontented with the new ministerial arrangements.

It was again at Birmingham that he felt called on to justify his acquiescence in a measure which gave rate aid to voluntary schools, without complete control by the local authorities. He defended it on the ground that it established a central authority for both elementary and secondary education, and that although the managers of voluntary schools would retain a majority on the Committee the local authority would have in the last resort full control over the *secular* teaching. This plea did not by any means satisfy all his friends. Nor did it satisfy himself. Writing to the Duke of Devonshire on September 22, 1902, Mr. Chamberlain said :—'The political future seems to me—an optimist by profession—most gloomy. I told you that your Education Bill would destroy your own party. It has done so. Our best friends are leaving us by scores and hundreds, and they will

not come back. I do not think that the Tories like the situation, but I suppose they will follow the Flag. The Liberal Unionists will not.'¹

While he was thus protesting in private to a colleague the revolt among his Birmingham friends became so serious that he was obliged to confront them with a threat. He warned them that if the Government were defeated on the Education Bill they would resign, and thus Ireland would be handed over to the Home Rulers, and the settlement in South Africa would be transferred to the Little Englanders! Such a prospect in those days blanched the cheeks of Unionists. It was a prospect at which he himself was appalled.

The only logical alternative to the scheme of the Education Bill, according to Mr. Chamberlain was an absolutely secular system and he turned with despair from the idea of forcing upon the ratepayers the enormous cost of providing buildings and education for the children in voluntary schools. Moreover, he said that a revolution of this sort would make the compact between the Unionists impossible. The Education Bill had been adopted in the Cabinet while the war was unfinished and while he would have risked his reputation and his colonial policy by leaving office. Thus he was committed to it and publicly he made the best of it, but he never pretended to like it, and in his discontent he turned his mind to other projects.

Less time was spent by Mr. Chamberlain in the House during 1902 than in any year since he was elected a member. Except on colonial affairs, the minister who had been accused of too much interference spoke only once or twice. For his unusual conduct he offered an excuse. 'I have been,' he said, 'engaged in my own room working for hours on important questions which come to me for settlement from every part of the empire.' A critic might retort that in 1897, notwithstanding the delicate questions which arose out of the Raid and the Inquiry to which it led, he found time to carry the Compensation for Accidents Bill, and that he piloted the Small Houses Bill in 1899 when the most delicate and important negotiations were being carried on with President Kruger.

In the autumn of 1902 he looked moody and irritable. On the rare occasions on which he was present in the House during debate on the Education Bill he sat far off from the ministers conducting it, sometimes with eyes closed, thinking his own thoughts. Attempts to draw him into controversy were made in vain. At his own time he would rise, draw a long breath, and hurry to his own work in his own room. Evidently he was brooding over some deep design. A well-known Unionist went about the Lobby whispering to Liberals, 'What a mess we are making of it! Isn't it time you fellows turned

¹ *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, by Bernard Holland.

us out ? ' Relief was obtained by Mr. Chamberlain in another manner.

On October 27, the day of King Edward's state procession through London, a sensation was caused by the announcement that the Colonial Secretary intended to proceed on an official visit to South Africa. Politicians always ready to suspect his motives suggested that his primary object was to escape from the Education Bill. It was he himself, as Mr. Balfour stated, who conceived the idea of the mission.

The only speech that he delivered in Parliament in connexion with the measure which excited the passionate hostility of the Non-conformists was on the motion to apply the closure to it by compartments. Although he had warned the Duke of Devonshire that they were sowing the seeds of an agitation which would undoubtedly be successful in the long run, he boasted to the House of Commons that he had not lost the support of his Birmingham friends. 'The idea,' he said, 'that because a great party on a complicated bill has displayed certain differences of opinion, there is the commencement of a revolt or mutiny, or that those who take a different view of the bill than themselves are about to join the Radical party, is utterly absurd to those who know the political life of Birmingham.' A fortnight later he set out for South Africa and left his new clerical allies fighting his old Nonconformist friends. He was thousands of miles away when the bill was passed.

THE ILLIMITABLE VELD

THE Colonial Secretary's decision to visit South Africa and examine on the spot the problems which followed the war excited interest throughout the empire and was unreservedly commended by politicians at home. All were desirous to promote conciliation between Boer and Briton and to secure a settlement on a stable basis. Even the Jingoese who had been the keenest promoters of the forward policy were ready now to forgive the former foes of their country. It was universally expected that Mr. Chamberlain's visit, even if inspired partly by considerations unconnected with the colonies, would do good, and Mr. Morley, who usually attributed to him the highest motive, declared that his fitness for the formidable task of reconstructing the social fabric and overcoming the moral and material difficulties in South Africa was greater than that of any other man he knew.

The universal notice attracted by so novel a mission, and the flattery lavished on Mr. Chamberlain, revived his drooping spirits. He 'bestrode the narrow world like a Colossus,' and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who took as keen a pleasure as a kindly man of the world could find in dropping piquant phrases on an adversary, remarked that he was a little *tête montée*. Scribes and tattlers gossiped as to the exact meaning of these words with as minute an air as Mr. Meredith's Egoist and Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson. A 'swelled head' was the popular translation, but learned critics noted a deeper reading. One pointed out in the *Athenæum* that in France the phrase is used for a particular form of excited obstinacy on a given point. The second of the two words is employed as in the 'rising' of milk when it boils over, so that according to an erudite commentator '*tête montée*' has elements not only of personal intellectual pride, but also of sudden movement and even of anger.

The gibe was provoked by an acrimonious passage in the traveller's leave-taking speech to the House of Commons on South Africa—a speech to which the Boer Generals Botha and Delarey listened in the strangers' gallery. Mr. Chamberlain promised to be noncontroversial, but if his spirit was willing his tongue was weak.

There's something in me that reproves my fault;
But such a headstrong potent fault it is,
That it but mocks reproof.

Even in an hour of good-will he could not resist the temptation to flick the sore spot in an adversary. Replying to some observations by Sir William Harcourt, he said sarcastically, 'I suppose the right honourable gentleman is a leader.' 'Oh!' exclaimed Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, in reproach at his sarcasm. 'I beg the right honourable gentleman's pardon,' retorted the Colonial Secretary, looking across at Sir William's successor; 'I forgot *he* is the leader.' Sir Henry, whose face was blanched with anger at this sneer, sprang to the table and reminded him of his promise. 'Where is the matter of controversy?' meekly asked the pitiless debater, as if he were making the most innocent inquiry: 'I said the member for Monmouthshire was a leader. Is that a matter of controversy?' The question excited the merriment of Unionists, but exasperated the Radicals. 'Very small!' cried one of the latter. 'I am glad,' retorted Mr. Chamberlain with a mocking bow, 'to have the opinion of so good a judge.'

Birmingham naturally took the leading part in the friendly send-off to its famous townsman. All parties united there in a banquet and a torchlight procession in his honour. According to the resolution of the local Liberal Association, there was a unanimous feeling that his mission was wisely conceived in the interests of future peace and that every one anxious for the fusion of parties and races in South Africa should do the utmost to make it a success. Although political opponents resented a partisan allusion which fell from him in the House of Commons to this mark of good-will on the part of his fellow-citizens, nothing occurred to mar the gracefulness or friendliness of the compliment; and indeed the whole country joined in approval of the spirit and aim with which he undertook his journey. 'I go,' he said, 'to see every representative of every class and race and section who may desire to see me. My ears will be open to all that they have to say to me, my eyes to all that they will show me.'

The imperialism which had been gradually encroaching on his parochial-mindedness was now in complete possession of Mr. Chamberlain's imagination. Twenty years had passed since John Bright and Lord Granville detected in that complex nature the spirit of the Jingo. In his resistance to Home Rule he gave expression to it, and the imperial flame was fanned by the sympathy of Canada and Australia and other colonies with the mother-country in its time of trial, and by their zeal in furnishing men to fight the Boers. 'We are all imperialists now,' said the Colonial Secretary at a Fishmongers' banquet in October, 1900; 'we have at last abandoned the "craven fears of being great," which were the disgrace of a previous age, and now we find that our people, the democracy, understand the nature, the extent, the possibilities of this great empire.' 'Think of it, gen-

tlemen,' he cried, 'an empire such as the world has never seen !' There was the same spirit in his speech on August 1, 1902, when he and Lord Kitchener received the freedom of the Grocers' Company. He quoted from Milton's *Areopagitica* an inspiring passage : 'Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam.'

Thus inspired by imperialism, out of sympathy with home controversies, and anxious to effect a conciliatory settlement in the land where war had left much racial ill-feeling, Mr. Chamberlain, accompanied by his wife, sailed from England on November 25 in His Majesty's Ship *Good Hope*. Going by the Mediterranean and East Africa he had an audience of the Khedive of Egypt and paid a visit to the Pyramids, he took a trip on the Uganda railway to Nairobi where a war-dance was given in his honour and he called on the Sultan of Zanzibar.¹

His reception at Durban, which he reached on December 26, was enthusiastic, and he had the same experience wherever Britons were gathered together. They were immensely interested in the strong statesman, and were gratified by a visit which was without precedent in our history. The attitude of the Dutch varied. Some were encouraging and cordial ; others were sullen and irreconcilable. Mr. Chamberlain visited battlefields and mines, he sojourned at many towns and passed through vast tracts of lonely veld, he conversed with old-fashioned farmers and negotiated with quick-witted financiers, he travelled by a *train de luxe* and by a mule-drawn wagonette, he saw the triumphs of industry and the devastations of war. At home his progress through the various colonies, old and new, was followed with minute attention. It was described day by day in the newspapers as fully as the state tour of a prince, and usually the accounts of it were as glowing as those of a royal tour.

While naturally extolling the empire and the flag in most of his orations, Mr. Chamberlain made friendly and even generous overtures to those who had fought against us. 'We hold out our hand,' he said, on arriving at Durban, 'and we ask the Dutch to take it frankly and

¹ While Mr. Chamberlain was off the East coast of Africa the King's speech at the prorogation of Parliament recorded : 'The war in South Africa, after lasting for two years and a half, has been brought to a successful and honourable conclusion ; the new Colonies of the Transvaal and the Orange River have been incorporated in my Empire, and in spite of the inevitable difficulties consequent on a long, destructive war, there seems every reason to hope that material prosperity, greater than any they have yet experienced, may visit these regions, and that all sections of the population may live together in friendship with each other, and loyalty to the Crown.'

in the spirit in which it is tendered.' He claimed no racial ascendancy. On the contrary, in the speeches which marked his journey through Natal, he advocated social as well as political unity. Several of the Boer Generals and other prominent Dutch residents attended a garden party to meet him at the Residency, at Pretoria, and sat at table with the British at a banquet given in his honour. His experience in the Transvaal was on the whole encouraging, but it produced some disillusionment, and this was not due to one race alone. Even at the Pretoria banquet a spokesman for the British community in proposing the High Commissioner's health remarked that they wanted crown colony government 'with a little less crown and a little more colony.' 'I was under the impression,' said Mr. Chamberlain, in an injured tone, 'that I had come here as one of the guests in a social gathering; I did not know that I was expected to face controversial subjects.' On the proper occasions he dealt plainly enough with many stiff controversies.

It was not only in a spirit of conciliation, but also, as he stated, in a spirit of firmness that he visited South Africa, and the latter quality was shown by him in a reply to a memorial of Boer delegates, who requested that an amnesty might be extended to the rebels in our old colonies who had fought against us. According to Mr. George Griffith, who has preserved his vivid impressions in a book *With Chamberlain through South Africa*, 'his face was like a flint,' and the Dutchmen who listened in the Chamber in which the First Raad used to sit 'felt every word like a whip lash,' when he begged the Boers to show by their own conduct towards the National Scouts (who fought on our side) that they were ready to let the past bury the past. That, he said, was a condition which should precede a request for a general British pardon. 'We shall keep our part of the contract,' he declared, 'with reference to the terms of peace, and we expect you to keep yours.' After the interview the Boer leaders who had formerly counselled moderation advised their fellow-countrymen to loyally accept the situation.

At Johannesburg, where he spent ten January days, the travelling Secretary of State had to deal with other problems. Here he conducted financial negotiations with the capitalists of the Rand. The opinion was strongly held by all classes at home that the colonists in whose interest the mother-country had made enormous sacrifices should lighten the burden on the taxpayers by a substantial contribution to the cost of the war. At the same time their willingness to do so was doubted. 'There are people who say,' as Mr. Chamberlain told the rich men of Johannesburg, 'you are the only British citizens that will fail in your duty.' 'No,' they shouted, whereupon, he responded coldly: 'I will wait and see.' On the result of the financial

negotiations the success of his unprecedented tour would, in the vision of many critics, to a great extent depend ; and he himself did not wish to return home empty-handed. Mr. Chamberlain's first idea when he went out was that all future surpluses on certain sources of revenue in the Transvaal should be ear-marked for payment to Great Britain towards the cost of the war. In Johannesburg, however, he was turned from this plan by the mining magnates. It was agreed, after many conferences, that a certain sum should be raised by loan. At first the smart men of the Rand proposed that the whole of this money should be spent on the material development of the country, but, as Mr. William Maxwell, the correspondent of the *Standard*, stated, Mr. Chamberlain at once pointed out that this scheme was tantamount to paying one's debts by spending the amount of them on oneself.

A remarkable bargain was struck. The home Government, on the advice of Mr. Chamberlain, undertook to guarantee a loan of thirty-five millions sterling for reproductive works in the new colonies ; and on the other hand another loan of thirty millions, secured on the assets of the Transvaal, was to be raised in three annual instalments as a contribution to the war debt of the United Kingdom, a group of financiers in Johannesburg undertaking to subscribe the first ten millions. This arrangement, arrived at with the great mining houses, was ratified by a conference of traders and merchants as well as Rand representatives. Disappointment with it was expressed in many organs of the British press. 'We give you'—one critic said in summing it up—'thirty-five millions and you give us thirty.' Mr. Chamberlain, although he had hoped to get more, described the war contribution of thirty millions as a liberal recognition by the Transvaal of its duty to the empire. There was one point on which he was emphatic. He intimated that the whole scheme hung together and that the one part could not be separated from the other ; and it was assumed by the fellow countrymen of a Secretary of State who prided himself on his business training that any bargain he entered into would be definite and binding. Events decided otherwise.

Much conversation was held at Johannesburg on another subject which led to great contention. The importation of Chinese labour for the mines had then begun to be advocated by the financiers, and there was a rumour of an arrangement under which they were to submit to extra taxation while the Colonial Secretary was to agree to their demand. A placard, indeed, was issued to the effect that thirty millions was the price to be paid by the colony for the Yellow Army. Mr. Chamberlain, however, declared that this would be an ignoble bargain, discreditable to the mining interests and almost treasonable on his own part. He insisted that before they tried the Chinese experiment every other means of obtaining labour must be exhausted.

The overwhelming public opinion of the Transvaal was, he said, opposed to it, and other parts of the empire would regard the step as retrograde and dangerous. His influence was undoubtedly cast against the experiment. The *Times* correspondent noted with satisfaction his 'unequivocal recommendation' in favour of unskilled white labour. 'Whether his remarks,' added that cautious observer, 'will have any effect remains to be seen.'

Business transactions were hallowed at a banquet by glowing imperialism to which the response was enthusiastic enough. 'The day of small kingdoms with petty jealousies is past,' said Mr. Chamberlain, 'the future is with great empires, and there is no greater empire than ours.' With 'a colonial poet' he exclaimed—

Unite the Empire, make it stand compact—
Shoulder to shoulder, let its members feel
The touch of human brotherhood, and act
As one great nation, true and strong as steel.

It was another class and race that he encountered when, on leaving Johannesburg and its business men, he visited the districts of Krugersdorp, Potchefstroom, Ventersdorp and Lichtenburg. Here he met the old-fashioned farmers, and 'the more he saw of them the better he liked them.' One day he was seated with General Andreas Cronje in a carriage drawn by Boers; another day he rode at the head of a company of mounted burghers and exchanged friendly sentiments with General Delarey. At Lichtenburg, addressing former foes, he said: 'Let us all join together to repair the ravages of the war, which was brought about, I believe, by a misunderstanding. You were suspicious of us and we of you. Now let us trust each other. If there comes among you any mischief-maker from outside tell him to mind his own business.' This appeal was responded to in a similar spirit by Delarey and several Boers are reported to have said that if he had come earlier there might have been no war.

There were, however, many trying and embarrassing incidents. One of the Boer leaders invited Mr. Chamberlain to meet some of his fellow-countrymen in his drawing-room. The meeting took place in the open air and when the visitor expressed surprise his host said, 'This is my drawing-room, your soldiers destroyed my house.' The trek from Potchefstroom to Mafeking in a wagonette was exhausting and wearying. Elaborate precautions were taken to protect the distinguished traveller from any hostile attack or intrusion. An escort was provided, and the convoy was guarded by flanking patrols who were posted at commanding points and kept out of sight as much as possible. There was no real danger. The Boers were anxious indeed that he should have every facility to visit districts which had suffered from the war. What was trying enough to the

traveller was the monotony of the land. Michael Fairless tells of a dying man in the East End who on hearing about the golden streets of the New Jerusalem said, 'It'll feel natral like if there's chimneys too.' Probably on the veld Mr. Chamberlain longed to see the chimneys of Birmingham.

At Mafeking, where his experience was varied by attendance at an indaba of Bechuana chiefs, he had a very hearty reception from the patriotic British, and at Kimberley the enthusiasm rose to 'a pitch of frenzy.' Here he played on the imperial idea with his utmost fervour: 'Do not forget the mother-land that bore you, and in your time of stress and difficulty came to your aid. She may yet need your support. You must be prepared at all costs to give it. What an empire it is for which we are all responsible! It is the greatest in extent that the world has ever known. . . . What a heritage! You are co-heirs with us in its privileges and glories. Are you going to be content to be sleeping partners? You must claim a share in all that the empire represents—claim it as an honour and a privilege to share her burdens and obligations.'

These demonstrations, however, were only as rare green spots in the desert. Even in the towns the popular displays were insignificant as compared with those to which Mr. Chamberlain was accustomed at home. His life for many days was full of boredom. He was fatigued by the long journeys by road and rail and depressed by the stolidity or indifference of many of the Boers. Even battlefields such as Paardeberg, the scene of Cronje's surrender, where the traveller halted on his trek to Bloemfontein, were not quite inspiring; and trouble awaited him at almost every centre.

His visit to the capital of the Orange River Colony, although it was inaugurated in a picturesque manner with a cavalcade of horsemen and Cape carts, was not altogether agreeable. The distinguished statesman, with a hand open for beaten foes and a mind ready to forget their past conduct, was naturally annoyed by the irreconcilability of an extreme section of Dutch headed by General Christian De Wet. The 'wild Boers' presented an address for which he rebuked them because it accused the victors of contravening the terms of peace. Reuter's telegram reports that 'after shaking hands with General De Wet he went to his seat and began to speak immediately. He said he was surprised and offended by the address which had impugned his and the Government's honour.' When the General rose to speak Mr. Chamberlain peremptorily motioned him to sit down; and he spoke sharply and angrily to Judge Hertzog. Once more his firmness, according to the English journalists, produced a salutary impression, and the 'loyal' burghers repudiated the action of the irreconcilables.

If he were not naturally sanguine and confident he might have

been depressed in Cape Colony. He found more unfriendliness among the Dutch here than among the old-fashioned folk in the Transvaal. Yet his efforts to promote conciliation were not slackened. At Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth he pleaded eloquently for the fusion of the races. He compared Dutchman and Englishman to Beatrice and Benedick, who were separated by an apparently invincible dislike, but each of whom through kindly stratagem was made to believe that the other was in love. The Colonial Secretary desired the intervention in South Africa of 'a beneficent potentate like the Duke in *Much Ado about nothing*.' But was he not himself playing the part of the Duke? At Graaf Reinet, rebel badges were displayed in the streets during his visit, and at Paarl many of the inhabitants disdained even to come to their doors to look at the great statesman. 'The Dutch nature,' as *The Times* correspondent pleaded, 'does not lend itself to enthusiasm.'

Even those South Africans who had little sympathy with Mr. Chamberlain were impressed by the spirit in which he concluded his tour at Capetown. Here he spent eight days in conferences and interviews. He was indefatigable in his mission, if not always tactful. Engagements mainly of an official and formal character had been arranged for him, but he added others, and insisted on seeing many representative men for himself. He conferred with the Dutch leaders, including Jan Hofmeyr (who remarked to a friend that he seemed to be contemplating some new scheme), and the response to his overtures was declared to be satisfactory.

A personal appeal was addressed by Mr. Chamberlain to a deputation of the South African party. 'I have come here,' he said, 'at some inconvenience to myself. I have no personal motives and no political ambition to gratify. I am older than most of those present, and my time of active service is necessarily coming to a close. I have tried to fulfil my great mission in an impartial spirit. I ask you,' he continued, 'to give up all kinds of animosity which can prevent co-operation for the common good, and also for that imperial dominion which is yours as well as ours.' At a farewell banquet he remarked that the premier colony was the point of danger, but the incidents of his final week there had had the effect of relieving his anxiety, and he was going away with the well-grounded hope that a new era was beginning, and that the Cape would lead the way in the policy of reconciliation. Thus encouraged he sailed for home on February 25. He went out an optimist, and he returned with optimism in his language if not in his heart.

During his tour he did not follow the advice of Polonius to Laertes : 'Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.' To every man he gave voice as well as ear. In the course of two months he delivered about

seventy speeches, besides receiving between a hundred and a hundred and fifty deputations, and holding interviews with nearly five hundred men of all parties and shades of opinion. It was said in the King's speech at the opening of Parliament on the day that Mr. Chamberlain reached Capetown, that his visit 'has already been productive of the happiest results; and the opportunity which it has provided for personal conference with Lord Milner, with the Ministers of the self-governing colonies, and with the representatives of all interests and opinions, has greatly conduced to the smooth adjustment of many difficult questions, and to the removal of many occasions of misunderstanding.' Complimentary references to it were made by opponents as well as friends in both Houses at Westminster. Sir William Harcourt spoke of the 'enlightened spirit of conciliation in which he had sought to heal the wounds that had been inflicted in the war,' and Mr. Morley reported that all parties agreed in recognizing 'the manful and intrepid spirit which induced him to go and watch the working of his own policy on the spot, and to endeavour to produce from it the fruits of a real conciliation.'

In one respect the tour was a failure. It had proved a severer physical strain than was expected. To fellow-passengers on the homeward voyage Mr. Chamberlain said he had never had a harder time in his life. He looked more fagged than when he went away.

Many honours awaited the imperial traveller on his arrival at Southampton on March 14. From his own city he received the first welcome, a deputation of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association meeting him on board the steamer and presenting an address. By the port town itself he was greeted with an enthusiasm usually reserved for a popular and successful general. 'I come back,' he said, 'in a spirit of hopefulness—nay, even of confidence.' His reception in London by all classes, by colleagues and by populace, was exceedingly cordial. On the day after his return he had an audience of the King at Buckingham Palace, and when he reappeared in the House of Commons, looking bronzed and thinner than when he left, Unionists cheered again and again, while Radicals and Nationalists, as a set-off to their demonstration, gave an equally hearty welcome to Mr. Crooks, the Labour member who had just wrested Woolwich from the Conservative party.

Crowds on the streets acclaimed Mr. Chamberlain on the 20th, when he went to the City to be honoured by the Corporation with an address of congratulation. On this occasion, indeed, he enjoyed again a triumph such as is seldom accorded except to princes and soldiers. In the Guildhall, when he rose to reply, the whole distinguished assembly stood up and hailed him with ringing cheers. Subsequently, at luncheon at the Mansion House, the Prime Minister effusively

remarked how deeply his tour had touched the imagination of the whole country. It was described in exclamatory language by the Lord Mayor : ' such prodigies of travel, such marvels of oratory, . . . a progress unparalleled in either ancient or modern history, under circumstances which would have seriously taxed the endurance of a younger man.' On the 21st the Queen received Mrs. Chamberlain at the palace, and the Colonial Secretary dined with the King, leading statesmen of both sides being among the guests invited to meet him.

With the applause of the empire ringing in his ears Mr. Chamberlain looked as if he were at the zenith of fame. His head seemed to strike the stars, his prestige in Parliament being higher than ever, and his popularity in the country much greater than that of any other Unionist statesman. *Tête montée*, the gibe suggested by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, was now flung at him every day by sneering opponents who dreaded his supremacy. When he went away he left the two sides in Parliament fighting over the Education Bill ; when he returned he found a section of the Unionists in revolt against futile army projects. He spent as little time on the Treasury bench as before. As soon as he had answered the questions relating to his own department, he retired to his room ; and few were the speeches or subjects which drew him back before the division bell rang. He dissociated himself almost ostentatiously from current controversies.

One of the most interesting chapters in his career was concluded by the speech in which he gave to the House of Commons an optimistic account of the prospects in South Africa. Discussion taking place upon the guarantee loan of £35,000,000 for the development of the new colonies, he stated that the support of Parliament to the loan was conditional upon the contribution of £30,000,000 towards the war. The arrangement, as he announced it, ' was to fix the contribution of the Transvaal at the largest possible sum which it could pay, having regard to its present resources, in the course of the next year or two.' Years passed without the payment of the first instalment, but the veiled future did not disturb Mr. Chamberlain's optimism in March, 1903, nor check the admiration of the Unionist majority in Parliament. Men applauded him then who scarcely ever applauded him again.

XXXVI

FISCAL VOLTE-FACE

O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press for ever first
In single fight incurring single risk ?

ON May 15, 1903, occurred the most sensational volte-face in Mr. Chamberlain's exciting career. Making then his first political appearance in Birmingham since his return from South Africa, he was honoured with a splendid demonstration of welcome. Thousands of people who failed to get into the Town Hall to hear him assembled in the streets and cheered their hero. His speech was awaited with lively curiosity. Great, however, as were the expectations, they were far exceeded by the event. Nobody outside his most confidential circle anticipated that he was to renounce Free Trade and proclaim a new fiscal policy as the issue for the next election. His announcement was veritably a *coup de tonnerre*.

What he was thinking of, members of the House of Commons had wondered, as he sat on the Treasury bench after his grand tour ? Few observers believed that in his silent, sombre moods his mind was lingering ' in the dark backward and abysm of time.' Allusions which he had thrown out in the previous two years to the approaching close of his political service might have betrayed temporary weariness as well as disappointment, but his unquiet heart would not permit him to linger upon the stage in a secondary rôle ; he ' must press for ever first.' ' You can burn your leaflets,' he said to the Opposition whip, ' we are going to talk about something else.' While others were thinking of voluntary schools and army corps and Irish land purchase, on all of which subjects he was out of sympathy with his colleagues, he was dreaming dreams no Liberal dared to dream before.

The secret of his new ideas was not disclosed even on the Budget of the year, although it dealt with the fateful duty of one shilling per quarter on corn. This tax had a brief existence. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach imposed it in 1902 ; his successor, Mr. Ritchie, took it off in 1903. ' It lends itself very readily to misrepresentation,' pleaded the new Chancellor of the Exchequer. Liberals remembering how stoutly

the Conservatives had defended it for a year laughed when it was abandoned. One member conjectured that the ministers in withdrawing it were riding for a fall ; another suggested that they were preparing for a dissolution.

The inward meaning of the rapid change was disclosed afterwards by the Chancellor. Mr. Chamberlain had desired that the shilling duty which was imposed for revenue purposes should be kept on in order that preference should be given to the colonies. Mr. Ritchie was resolutely opposed to any such proposal ; he told the Prime Minister that if it were accepted he would leave the Government. ' I knew perfectly well,' he said, ' that this would be only the commencement of a much larger scheme.' Mr. Chamberlain's proposal was submitted to his colleagues a few days before he left for South Africa, and he heard of Mr. Ritchie's final refusal before he returned home in March. On the 31st of that month he was present at the Cabinet Council at which the Budget was settled, and failing to get a colonial preference he agreed that in the meantime the duty should be dropped. The House and the country were not aware of these circumstances. They were known only to the Government.

Mr. Chamberlain bided his time. He made his preliminary plans. Unlike Lord Randolph Churchill, he did not risk his career by a single step without calculating where it would lead him. He delayed his first visit to his adopted town. His meeting at last was held on the very day on which the Prime Minister, in reply to a deputation, defended or excused the withdrawal of the corn duty. While Mr. Balfour took one line, his daring colleague took another.

With a fearless candour the statesman who had been the champion of domestic causes and the keenest fighter in the ordinary battles of Parliament assumed a completely new standpoint. He said he was a little out of touch with controversial politics ; his party weapons were a little rusty ; he was still under the glamour of his new experience. ' You are excited at home about the Education Bill, about temperance reform, about local finance ; but these things matter no more to South Africa, to Canada, to Australia, than their local affairs matter to you.' As further proof of his aloofness he mentioned that he did not share the excitement caused by bye-elections ; it might be he was less sensible to sudden emotion since he returned from his travels ! Then in a phrase which was often quoted in sarcasm and raillery, he said that ' the calm which is induced by the solitude of the illimitable veld may have affected my constitution.'

Thus he introduced a new fiscal policy—preference for trade with our colonies, and a power of negotiation with, and if necessary retaliation against, foreign countries. His chief plea at first was imperial union. He declared that on what we might do within the next few years would

depend the enormous issue 'whether this great empire of ours is to stand together as one free nation—if necessary against all the world—or whether it is to fall apart into separate States, each selfishly seeking its own interest alone, losing sight of the common weal, and losing also all the advantages which union can give.' The colonies, according to Mr. Chamberlain, were trying to promote imperial union, and first among the means which they proposed were preferential tariffs: they were to give a preference to goods from the mother-country, and we were to give a preference to their goods as against those of foreign nations. Such a scheme, involving tariffs for other than revenue purposes was contrary, as he admitted, to the established fiscal policy of this country, but now he doubted 'whether the interpretation of Free Trade which is current among a certain limited section is the true interpretation.' This he described as an issue much greater in its consequences than any of our local disputes; and looking forward to the General Election he significantly added: 'I think our opponents may, perhaps, find that the issues which they propose to raise are not the issues on which we shall take the opinion of the country.'

An enormous sensation was produced by so amazing a declaration. The country rang with it; every politician and every newspaper discussed it day after day; it gave a fresh impulse to Mr. Chamberlain's notoriety; he was again the hero of the man in the street. Protectionists raised their heads in hope while the Free Traders who had cheered the Cobdenite speeches of the old Radical sorrowfully re-read them for arguments with which to reply to his new doctrines. These caused in many quarters a sense of stupefaction.

No statesman of his generation had presented the case for Free Trade more clearly or emphatically. Twenty years previously Mr. Chamberlain had pointed to 'conclusive evidence of the soundness of Mr. Cobden's doctrines'; and when Mr. Ecroyd, in 1882, suggested a colonial or imperial union for the purpose of doing away with duties between the different parts of the empire, he replied that it was impossible to tax food without raising its price, and that it was only by increasing the price that the object of Mr. Ecroyd could be achieved, and this he regarded as a fatal objection. In November, 1885, after he had five years' experience of the Board of Trade, Mr. Chamberlain dealt with part of the proposal which he himself now put forward. Lord Salisbury was then, as he said, anxious to induce the colonies to take off their tariffs by giving them the advantages of a differential duty whenever they did so. 'But,' he argued, 'the only goods the colonies send us are food and raw materials—no manufactures whatever—and therefore Lord Salisbury is convicted out of his own mouth, for he is going to put a differential duty on the beef, the corn, the sugar, and the other necessities of the working man's home. The noble lord

may be deceiving himself—he may be entirely ignorant upon this subject—or he may be trying to deceive you. But in either case he is not a safe guide for you to follow, and I warn you at the bottom of this Fair Trade cry there is the question of a return to those bad times of Protection and of the Corn Laws, which were responsible for the destitution and the starvation wages from which your forefathers suffered so greatly.’ The man who used those words lived to deny that Protection was responsible for destitution and starvation.

His conversion, so far as the public knew, was as sudden as Mr. Gladstone’s in the case of Home Rule. The ‘Memoir of H. O. Arnold-Forster’ shows that as far back as 1896 his mind was turning to the idea of tariff union with the colonies, that he was then ‘hopeful about a differential duty’ and regarded food duties as essential. For his scheme of 1903, however, he did not prepare the country. It was on the basis of Free Trade within the empire that at a Canada Club dinner in 1896 he suggested imperial federation. Next year at the Jubilee conference the colonial Premiers discussed trade relations and undertook to consider whether a preference might not be given to imports from the United Kingdom, but this did not lead to any common action. In 1898 there was an interesting controversy on the conduct of the Government in approving of the provision adopted by Rhodesia to the effect that the duty on British goods should never exceed the existing Cape tariff. This was described by Mr. Morley as a scheme which the Colonial Secretary formerly declined to touch with a pair of tongs, but Mr. Chamberlain explained that the scheme from which he shrank was a reciprocal arrangement, whereas the policy proposed in connexion with Rhodesia was that the colonies should make a differential duty in our favour, without demanding anything in return.

Again, at the Colonial Conference in 1902 Mr. Chamberlain declared that our first object was free trade within the empire, although he used language indicating that his mind was moving in a new direction. He said the experience of Canada (which had given a preference with somewhat disappointing results) showed that ‘while we may most readily and most gratefully accept from you any preference which you may be willing voluntarily to accord to us, we cannot bargain with you for it : we cannot pay for it unless you go much further and enable us to enter your home market on terms of greater equality.’ ‘So long,’ he went on, ‘as a preferential tariff, even a munificent preference, is sufficiently protective to exclude us altogether, or nearly so, from your markets it is no satisfaction to us that you have imposed even greater disability upon the same goods if they come from foreign markets, especially if the articles in which the foreigners are interested come in under more favourable conditions.’

The Conference, while adopting resolutions in favour of a prefer-

ential system, decided that it was not practicable under existing conditions in the colonies to establish Free Trade between them and the mother-country. The Canadian Ministers asked that in return for the preference given to products of the United Kingdom, those from the Dominion should be exempted from our corn duty. Mr. Chamberlain was unable at that time to recommend such a course to his colleagues. Subsequently, however, he endeavoured to use the tax as a means of introducing the policy of reciprocal preference, which he had previously shrunk from touching, and when his plan was frustrated by a Free Trade Chancellor of the Exchequer he appealed from his colleagues to the electors.

Various motives were attributed to Mr. Chamberlain in connexion with his new course. He was charged with personal ambition: it was said by unsympathetic critics that in spite of all protests he envied Mr. Balfour and desired with a policy of his own to capture the leadership of the Unionist party. He was charged also with the pettier motives of resentment and revenge; it was—according to some of his opponents—because he failed to get his way in the Cabinet that he had decided to sacrifice his principles. Certainly he was not the man to accept a rebuff meekly from Mr. Ritchie, but if he wished merely to retaliate he could have done so without taking so daring a leap in the dark. Another charge was that he started the new cry with the object chiefly of diverting the attention of the country from the mismanagement of the war, the blunders of army administration, the injustice of the Education Act to Dissenters, and the possible failure of his arrangements in South Africa. It was predicted that the mine-owners would force Chinese labour upon the Transvaal and it was conjectured that he desired to avoid responsibility for a system so repugnant to British sentiment.¹ *Punch* expressed the feeling of many Unionists in depicting him as meddlesome Joe, fidgety Joe. Like Shaftesbury, in Dryden's lines, he was considered even by some of those with whom he had been acting for seventeen years—

Restless, unfixed in principles and place;
In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace.

The view of an opponent sceptical as to his sincerity was given by Mr. Labouchere, who wrote—

On his return from South Africa he found that militant imperialism was at a discount, and that his popularity had diminished. It was necessary, therefore, for him to alter his tactics if he wished to be not only a Minister, but *the* Minister. So he became an Imperial Protectionist, and crusaded in favour of a tax on foreign imports, and taxation of food for the benefit of our colonies.

A more creditable explanation was that since he held his new office,

¹ Chinese indentured labour was sanctioned by Mr. Chamberlain's successor in 1904.

and particularly since his visit to the veld, he saw everything in the light of the colonies ; it was the dream of imperial union which inspired his policy. ' Yes,' he said, when he was chaffed on being a visionary ; ' yes, I am a political visionary ; I dream dreams of empire ; my waking thoughts are taken up with it.'

XXXVII

STORY OF OLD AGE PENSIONS

IN espousing the cause of Tariff Reform Mr. Chamberlain diverted the energy of his will from old age pensions. The subject lingered in his mind and he made a few spasmodic attempts to connect it with his new policy, but his record with regard to it forms the most disappointing chapter of a checquered career. It is a record of hope repeatedly renewed and always deferred. Pensions never were, but always to be passed!

The continuous story which may be conveniently narrated at this point, when social reform was exchanged for fiscal adventure, dates from 1891. Early that year, at Aston Manor, Mr. Chamberlain put before the electors 'my own ideas, my own plans' for making provision for old age, and recommended for discussion a system of compulsory insurance. In April, at Portsmouth, he suggested a scheme of insurance through the Post Office, and the same month he consulted the Grand Council of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association. 'Better,' he said, 'to keep together the home than to break up the kingdom!' Pensions were then his alternative to Home Rule. In May, presiding at a conference of members of Parliament and others, he recommended that they should begin with a voluntary scheme: if it proved successful it could be made compulsory at some future time. In June he wrote to the *Rural World*: 'I have placed myself in communication with the officials of the Post Office, and with some of the leading representatives of the great Friendly Societies, and I hope that with their assistance and advice it may be possible before long to suggest a definite scheme which will be practicable from a financial point of view, and at the same time will be popular with the working classes generally.' At a dinner of the Liberal Union Club in the same month he sketched a programme, and said: 'We may do something to promote a scheme of State assistance of thrift whereby we may make it easy for the working classes to provide against destitution in their declining years.' In November, at Birmingham, he stated there would be no chance whatever of carrying a compulsory scheme through Parliament, but he added: 'I confess for myself that I regret it, because a compulsory scheme would be very simple, and it would be absolutely necessary to a large measure of success.'

A committee of members of the House of Commons interested in the subject, which was formed in 1891, drew up a plan for a State Pension Fund to which Parliament should make an annual grant, supplemented by contributions from the local rates. 'I am not committed to this scheme or to any scheme,' declared Mr. Chamberlain in April, 1892. 'But my interest in the subject is not in the slightest degree diminished, and I shall give to it a persistent and continuous attention in the hope that even in my own time I may see the satisfactory solution of it.' On the eve of the General Election he became more definite. 'I beg to say,' he wrote to the *Rural World* in June, 'that the question of old age pensions has now been raised to the front rank of political questions. More discussion is required before the details of any scheme can be finally settled, but the principle for which I have been contending has been accepted by Mr. Balfour on behalf of the Government.' Two days before the dissolution, speaking in the Bordesley division, he expressed an equally emphatic opinion to the cheering electors. 'You know that I have made a proposal in reference to this matter. . . . I say that no man ought to be compelled to end his days in the workhouse, and I say that in some form or another, according to my proposal or according to some other, the State ought to come to his assistance, and to give him a pension, which at all events will be sufficient to prevent him from seeking poor-law relief at the end of his days.' Here are some allusions made by Mr. Chamberlain to the subject during the election of 1892:—

You know perfectly well that for some years I have been advocating a system of old age pensions. . . . I have been the first politician of Cabinet rank who has brought this matter to the public attention.—(July 8.)

Our scheme has been carefully examined by an actuary, and I am here to say that it is a practical proposal which, if we remain at peace, if the finances are well managed, and if we continue to have, as we have had during the course of the Unionist Government, large surpluses, we may be able to carry out, without adding one farthing to the taxation of the country.—(July 14.)

My old age pension scheme holds the field.—(July 16.)

During the Administration of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery the question was not forgotten. Early in 1893, the Midlands Liberal Unionist Association issued a leaflet headed 'Mr Chamberlain's Labour Programme' which included a statement of what he proposed on this subject.¹ In the same year a Royal Commission was appointed to consider whether any alterations in the system of poor-law relief were

¹ Old age pensions guaranteed by the State. Mr. Chamberlain proposes a payment of £2 10s. (before the age of twenty-five), and a subscription of 10s. a year to secure for a man a small pension at the age of sixty-five. Those who pay £5 down, and 20s. annually will also provide for the payment to the widows and children, in case of death before sixty-five. Men who have received a pension of 2s. 6d. a week in a Friendly Society will have the pension doubled by the State. Further information on the pension scheme may be obtained from any Liberal Unionist agent.

desirable in the case of persons whose destitution was caused by incapacity to work, or old age, and whether assistance could be otherwise afforded. While it was sitting in 1894, a bill to establish pensions was brought in by a private member, and as the discussion was adjourned at the instance of the Government, Mr. Chamberlain denounced them for defeating a measure 'which aimed at establishing a principle for which I am contending.' 'I look forward,' he said, 'to the time when some minister will be found bold enough to propose to lay aside experimentally what may be considered a reasonable sum towards the commencement of a system of old age pensions, and if that is satisfactory I am not disposed to place any limit on its ultimate development.' Other important declarations followed in his own city—

I want to give facilities to working men—to *all men, aye, and to all women*, to make provision against their old age. The Government have appointed a Commission to inquire into the subject. That has meant a delay of two years. I think myself the time might have been employed in inquiring into the details of a practicable scheme. I say that my mind, at any rate, and I believe the mind of the Unionist party, is made up.—(May 3, 1894.)

My hope is that under another Administration and under another Chancellor of the Exchequer, we may return to a time of prosperity, to a period of surpluses, and my hope and belief is that these surpluses may be used in order to stimulate the provision of those old age pensions which will do more, I believe, than anything else to secure the happiness and the contentment of the working classes. (December 6, 1894.)

A Unionist Chancellor came in with surpluses, but although Mr. Chamberlain boasted during the General Election of 1895 that his proposal was so simple that any one could understand it nothing was spared for old age. The Commission which sat from 1893 to 1895 recommended investigation by a small expert Committee, and accordingly the Rothschild Committee was appointed by the Salisbury Government in 1896. Two years later they made an unfavourable report. Their inquiry was described by the Colonial Secretary as very incomplete and unsatisfactory; and at the end of 1898 he admitted that it might not be possible immediately to deal with the question. There were financial considerations to be taken into account, and there were other matters, perhaps, which might have a still more pressing claim upon the Government. Nevertheless, hope sprung eternal in his breast. Perhaps he was pressing the problem upon his colleagues. He did not despair that 'before they went out of office they might be able to do something to assist, and to stimulate and encourage provision for old age, and to secure the veterans of industry, the men who had fought a good fight, from the worst consequence of failing power and of undeserved misfortune.' In the course, however, of controversy in the following year he treated his former proposal as tentative, and explained that it was dropped because it was not accepted on behalf of the working classes or the Friendly Societies. He recognized now that

any universal scheme for giving pensions to everybody was beyond the resources of the State, and would be open to the fatal objection that it would make no distinction between the provident, thrifty and industrious man, and the drunkard and spendthrift.

On the motion for the appointment of another Committee in April, 1899, when a private member brought in a bill, Mr. Asquith taunted Mr. Chamberlain with having given a 'promise' of pensions at Hanley in 1895.¹ 'It was a proposal, not a promise,' he explained. 'I think,' retorted Mr. Asquith, 'it will be sufficient to maintain an action for breach of promise,' but Mr. Chamberlain insisted that 'a proposal was merely a suggestion for discussion.' He admitted that some of his suggestions had proved inadequate and impracticable, and yet he was sanguine 'that before the Government goes out of office we shall have done something which will at all events furnish a practical scheme, the experience of which will be extremely useful in the future and will lead to the ultimate solution of the question.' A month later, addressing a deputation from the Oddfellows' Conference, he repeated: 'It is my hope before many months, and before this Parliament comes to an end, that something may be done.' This hope was not realized.

The Boer war absorbed the money which the Government might have devoted to the 'veterans of industry,' but during the election of 1900 he gaily boasted 'we have not done with old age pensions; I am not dead yet.' In May, 1901, with renewed power and different aspirations, he spoke slightly of 'this question of old age pensions—as it is sometimes called, although that is a description which I personally dislike.' He admitted that the matter of assisting men to make provision for old age had gone back, and now he laid the blame on the Liberals as well as on the Friendly Societies. A few months later, however, he held out once more 'the hope that something might be done' when the end of the war had arrived. The war ended and still there were no pensions. Tariff Reform became the new passion of his life, and pensions merely his hobby. They were suggested as part of his fiscal policy in 1903, but the suggestion was promptly withdrawn. 'Some years ago,' said Mr. Lloyd George, 'the right honourable gentleman was full of the question of old age pensions. He went through the country recommending it, travelling for it, and a very good trade he made out of it, but the profits were not distributed among the deserving poor. He pocketed the votes of the working classes and forgot all about their pensions.'

Perhaps it was not accurate to say he forgot them. He looked at them now and again and turned away with a sigh. There were several pathetic allusions to the delicate topic in his letters in 1905. In one he wrote: 'I have never in my life made a definite promise of old age

¹ See *note*, p. 203.

pensions.' In another he repeated the admission that he did not now believe a universal system to be either practicable or desirable. In January, 1906, on being reminded of the subject, he blamed his political opponents for the fact that no progress whatever had been made with his scheme. Formerly he had blamed the working classes and the Friendly Societies ; he had pleaded more pressing claims ; he had even confessed that his own original proposals were impracticable, and he had held the war responsible for the shelving of the project by the Unionists. Finally in his chagrin he scolded the Radicals and other ungrateful persons for refusing his bounties.

XXXVIII

SECOND RESIGNATION

'WONDERFUL,' writes Bacon, 'is the case of boldness in civil business. What first? Boldness. What second and third? Boldness. It doth fascinate and bind hand and foot; therefore we see it hath done wonders in popular States, and, moreover, upon the first entrance of bold persons into action.' So it was that by a single speech in 1903 tariff reform was thrust to the front of political controversies. By one blow Mr. Chamberlain arrested universal attention for his new creed and with breathless energy he followed up his first declaration with all the arts of a skilful tongue and brain. He tried to capture the mind of the country by surprise. Not content with advocacy on a public platform he promptly carried the subject to the House of Commons. A week after his sensational pronouncement in Birmingham he dragged it into a debate on old age pensions. He said he did not think the question of pensions was a dead question and he thought it might not be impossible to find the money. 'But that, no doubt,' he continued, 'will involve the review of the fiscal question which I have indicated as necessary and desirable at an early date.' And this he said as a member of a Government which was not agreed on the subject.

The challenge thrown down so unexpectedly to the Free Traders was taken up eagerly and confidently. Many Unionists were faithful believers in the existing fiscal system, and a large number of others with a conventional acceptance of current doctrine were annoyed by this new disturbance of their peace. Liberals, although not accepting Mr. Chamberlain's advice to burn their old leaflets, quickly got ready a stock of fresh material for campaigning purposes. Their deepest conviction was touched by the new issue, and they believed moreover that it would not only add to the discredit of the Government as a whole, but lead to the special undoing of their most powerful adversary. At once they raised the question of the taxation of food. This was seen to be the most vulnerable point in tariff reform, and its new champion was confronted with his former denunciations.

'Is any one bold enough to propose that we should put duties on food?' asked Mr. Chamberlain on August 12, 1881. He himself was bold enough to make the proposal in a debate raised under cover

of the Whitsuntide motion on May 28, 1903. The Prime Minister, who had not made up his own mind, fenced with the question of the Birmingham policy; he recommended discussion and inquiry, and undertook that the Government would not deal with it before the dissolution. His colleague, however, rushed in with a speech which contained a memorable sentence. 'We come to this,' said Mr. Chamberlain, 'that if you are to give a preference to the Colonies—I do not say that you are—you must put a tax upon food.' This announcement, uttered with a defiant vivacity, produced a profound impression. Members realized that it was a historic mark in politics and in the speaker's own career. It was instantly seized by opponents; it became the text of speeches and articles all over the country; it was placarded in almost every constituency.

The ideas expressed by Mr. Chamberlain in his first Parliamentary speech on the subject, were embodied with more precision in a letter to a working man. 'It will be impossible,' he wrote, 'to secure preferential treatment from the Colonies without some duty on corn, as well as on other articles of food, because these are the chief articles of colonial produce. . . . Whether this will raise the cost of living is a matter of opinion. . . . But even if the price of food is raised, the rate of wages will certainly be raised in greater proportion. . . . As regards old age pensions, I would not myself look at the matter unless I felt able to promise that a large scheme for the provision of such pensions to all who have been thrifty and well-conducted would be assured by a revision of our system of import duties.'

By whatever name the Tariff Reformer might describe his new policy, his opponents called it Protection. The little loaf and the big loaf, the taxed loaf and the untaxed loaf, figured on countless platforms and at every bye-election. Mr. Chamberlain was answered out of his own month, few men defending Cobdenism so ably as it had been defended by himself. The master of the art of damaging an opponent by quotations from their former utterances was fought with his own weapon. The printed word proved deadly. With keen gusto the Liberals quoted such passages as the following from speeches in 1881 and 1885: 'A tax on food would mean a decline in wages; it would certainly involve a reduction in their productive value; it would raise the price of every article produced in the United Kingdom, and it would indubitably bring about the loss of our gigantic export trade'; 'if you are going to tax the bread of the people you will affect every household in the land, and you will throw back the working classes of this country to the starvation wages and to the destitution from which Mr. Gladstone and Sir Robert Peel relieved them.' 'And who said that?' the orator after quoting the passage would ask. 'That was said,' he would reply, 'by the right honourable Joseph

Chamberlain.' Thereupon the audience would groan or laugh with bitter mockery.

Unionist Free Traders or Free Fooders, and a few Unionist newspapers, led by the *Spectator*, with the courage which comes from conviction, withstood their powerful Birmingham leader. The *Spectator* promptly predicted that if he forced his proposals to an issue he would shatter the party into fragments. A similar warning was given by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, then the most influential of the unofficial Conservatives. Several of the younger men, notably Mr. Winston Churchill who quickly showed that he had inherited the best of his father's qualities, and Lord Hugh Cecil, the rising hope of the clerical Tories, opposed the new policy with boldness and tenacity. Feelings of uneasiness and bewilderment permeated the party, and the vast majority of members hesitated and vacillated. While a few eagerly enrolled themselves on the side of a cause which they had advocated long before Mr. Chamberlain, and while others were its settled uncompromising opponents, the main body, dreading the approach of Protection, and yet honouring the Colonial Secretary, swayed hither and thither, like 'loitering, shivering, irresolute Hamlets.'

A temporizing attitude which exposed the ministers to manifold embarrassments and humiliations was adopted by the Government. During a debate on the Finance Bill, in which Sir Michael Hicks-Beach led an attack on Mr. Chamberlain's policy, the Chancellor of the Exchequer intimated that their view was that the question should be inquired into. For his own part Mr. Ritchie candidly admitted he would be surprised if inquiry would show any practical means of carrying out what was proposed. He read his reference to the subject from a document which Mr. Asquith described as 'the record of a truce' in the Cabinet. Mr. Arthur Elliot, a Unionist of acute intellect and Liberal traditions, who had a short time previously been appointed Secretary to the Treasury, and who edited the *Edinburgh Review* with distinction, was as frank and firm as Mr. Ritchie on the side of Free Trade. The Prime Minister, on the other hand, declared that he had 'no settled conviction.' Apparently he was, to quote words he used on another occasion, 'as a child in these matters,' and his innocence contributed to the rout of the army which he led.

In the whirligig of time Lord Goschen who had retired from the Government and was raised to the peerage in 1900 became once more the antagonist of Mr. Chamberlain. About thirty years previously the mayor of Birmingham had scolded him and other moderate Liberals; in the next decade the author of the unauthorized Radical programme scoffed at its Whig critic as 'the skeleton at Egyptian feasts'; Home Rule forced them into comradeship; they fought side by side in many a battle, praising each other's blows, and although the Radical Unionist

told Lord Randolph Churchill in 1886 that 'there was not a chance of his ever serving in the same Cabinet with Goschen' they became colleagues in 1895. Now in his old age and in his retirement from official life, one of the most trenchant of critics lifted up his voice against the ancient troubler of his peace.

A large number of peers assembled for the first of a series of brilliant fiscal debates in the Upper House; the side galleries were crowded with ladies, and there was an unusual muster of Privy Councillors on the steps of the throne. Lord Goschen, still a master of picturesque language, supplied the Free Traders with an effective fighting phrase when he denounced the new policy as 'a gamble' with the food of the people.¹ On another point he was equally stern in rebuke. The Colonial Secretary had said that unless we adopted his proposals 'we must accept our fate as one of the dying empires of the world.' This prediction excited the wrath of a statesman who was an imperialist at a time when the prophet was boasting of parochial-mindedness. With animated voice and energetic gesture, he protested against such reckless language, and asked: 'Is the doom of the empire to be pronounced on every platform if the people refuse to see their food taxed?'

Rival groups and factions were organized. Liberal Unionists and Conservatives had coalesced in order to resist Home Rule. Now another severance took place, but the new split did not follow the old division. Many members of both sections of the party which had been in power since 1895 supported tariff reform; a considerable number in both went against it. The Unionist Free Food League was formed by the opponents of Mr. Chamberlain's policy, while his adherents were enrolled in a more active and aggressive body. A few days after the famous Birmingham speech the Colonial Secretary received a petition from over 200 men of some note desiring a new organization. According to custom in such matters, a dinner was held; a meeting followed on a summer afternoon in a committee room of the House of Commons, and the Tariff Reform League was founded. Daily and nightly conferences of the various Leagues and sections were held at the House and the Lobby throbbed with intrigues, defiances, threatenings, upbraidings. One section lauded the member for West Birmingham as the saviour of the country; another accused him of reckless ambition. His latest step was likened by the Free Fooders to Mr. Gladstone's adoption of Home Rule and they predicted that its effects would be similar. Mr. Chamberlain, however, was himself again. He threw off his moodiness; his activity was tireless,

¹ In 1885 Mr. Chamberlain, accusing Lord Salisbury of 'a feeble imitation of Protection in the guise of what is called Fair Trade,' said he did not believe sensible men would commit their fortunes to a party or a statesman that would run such tremendous hazards in such a gambler's spirit.

and his spirits were buoyant ; he spent hours almost every afternoon in the Lobby, arguing with and persuading the doubters ; he pulled the electioneering strings, and while the Government relied on ' inquiry ' he pushed his policy, and a Tariff Committee in his town covered the country with leaflets. The Protectionists, although longing to assail Free Trade, had for years past been timid and quiescent. Now, at last, they had found a leader—the astutest, most energetic politician in the country—and they rallied enthusiastically to the tattered flag.

Keen curiosity existed as to the effect of the new disturbing factor on the relationship of the two principal Unionist statesmen. At a luncheon of the Constitutional Club on June 26 when Mr. Chamberlain was entertained and was presented by Mr. Balfour on behalf of the members with an address they referred to one another in affectionate terms. The Prime Minister was cordially cheered when he said that the Colonial Secretary had more than any other man, dead or alive, given life and expression to the idea of imperial unity. ' Clumsy efforts ' to separate them were, in turn, sneered at by Mr. Chamberlain. Presumably he meant the efforts which were made to prove that in starting his new propaganda he was acting disloyally to his chief. His declaration on the personal subject appeared to be quite explicit : ' I desire to say now, in public, what, as many of you know, I have continuously said in private, that in my opinion the leadership of Mr. Balfour is essential to the union and the success of the Unionist party.' This intimation was interpreted to mean that he was not then at any rate a candidate for the highest post. He was determined to prevail in policy, but in order to prevail it was necessary to carry Mr. Balfour with him. If the Prime Minister had at that early stage gone openly and decidedly against him, his difficulties would have been enormously increased.

By his allusion at the Constitutional Club to the merits of the controversy Mr. Chamberlain provoked still deeper antipathy than before. Quoting, in a strange context, the Biblical saying that ' man does not live by bread alone,' he argued that if the increased cost of bread was met by a proportionate decrease in some other articles, the cost of living would not be affected. Moreover, although these articles might be sold a little cheaper on account of our existing system, what, he asked, was the good of that to a man who could not afford to buy them ? To the subject of old age pensions, which he had connected with tariff reform in the House of Commons, he alluded now in a totally different manner. ' It is always near my heart,' he said, but he added that ' it has no part whatever in the question of a reform in our fiscal policy.' This contradiction of his former statement, while exposing him to a charge of recklessness, was regarded as a concession to those Tories who were afraid of the promise of pensions

and objected to its being used as a Protectionist bait. His own explanation was that his original idea was that the profits of a preference tax might be used for the promotion of social reform, but that on account of the Liberal attitude he was obliged to change his ground and treat it as part of a general scheme of fiscal rearrangement. On another feature of his case he was unrepentant. In spite of the protests of Lord Goschen and other imperialist Free Traders he coolly maintained his opinion that a system of preferential tariffs was 'the only system by which the empire could be kept together.'

Repeated efforts were made by Free Traders to discover what was the sort of inquiry which the Cabinet had agreed to in their truce. It was vaguely described by various ministers. On June 29 Lord Selborne described it as an inquest of the nation; on July 2 the Duke of Devonshire remarked that every member, every candidate, every elector must take part in it; and on July 10, the Marquis of Lansdowne stated that the Government would give to the public the facts and statistics upon which they would rely in forming their own judgment, this being an allusion to a huge volume subsequently issued by the Board of Trade. According to the Prime Minister himself the investigation was 'by the Cabinet for the Cabinet.' It served merely to hold the Government together for a little while. Mr. Chamberlain, who was now as alienated from his colleague, Mr. Ritchie, as he was from Mr. Morley in 1886, was not thinking of inquiry. His brother, Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, who adhered to Free Trade, hit the mark when in a phrase which became current in the controversy he stated at the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce on July 22 that they were going to have 'a raging, tearing propaganda.'

While the House of Commons, by the tactics of a Prime Minister with 'no settled conviction,' was obliged to fall back on questions in exploring the subject, the House of Lords rose to the occasion and deliberately debated Mr. Chamberlain's policy in all its aspects. On July 23, when another animated protest was made in the Gilded Chamber, Lord James of Hereford, who had been among his colleagues in the Governments both of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury, played an interesting rôle. From one of the back crimson benches he addressed an eloquent appeal to the Duke of Devonshire. Seventeen years previously his Grace 'saved the country' from Home Rule, and in the new crisis Lord James exhorted him to stand forth and give his aid in averting what would be a great disaster to the empire and a gross injustice to the people themselves. The slow-moving Duke had been irritated by the irruption of this fresh controversy, and by a new demand upon his energy at a period when he was expecting repose. At the same time he was not so alarmed as others were by Mr. Chamberlain's crusade. Free Trade, he said, was not to collapse 'at

the blast of the trumpet of a single man, however powerful.' Although Lord James's appeal may have touched his conscience, he was determined to do all in his power to prevent the breaking up of the Government.

In the Cabinet itself, however, the question was gradually although slowly causing a rift. Several controversies, of which the public were ignorant, took place in summer among the ministers, and Mr. Balfour learned that resignations were inevitable. On the last day of the session they had before them two documents, a pamphlet containing 'Economic Notes on Insular Free Trade' (subsequently published by Mr. Balfour) and another paper embodying the proposals which he wished officially to put forward in the name of the Government. Included in the latter, according to the revelation of Lord George Hamilton, were preferential tariffs and the taxation of food. 'We agreed,' said Lord George, 'to the publication of the first document; we differed as to the acceptance of the proposals in the second.' The discussion was adjourned, and members of the Government entered on their holidays with troubled minds. Those with convictions in favour of Free Trade must in their hearts have bitterly reproached the wrecker of their peace.

The reappearance of the Cabinet in Council on September 14, about two months before the time for the usual autumn meetings, was an open indication of the crisis which had hitherto been concealed. Mr. Balfour, in holiday suit and bowler hat, sprang up the steps of the Foreign Office, where the Council was held, with the jaunty gait of a man who thought that whatever happened he would be all right. Like Barrie's Tommy, he could be trusted to find a way out for himself. Mr. Chamberlain, so recently a popular hero, was hissed by some working men as he crossed the quadrangle, but he smoked his cigar unmoved. Less candid deliberations were never conducted by any statesmen. The Colonial Secretary had five days previously tendered his resignation, but Mr. Balfour did not mention that important circumstance to his colleagues. Mum was the word, as an artist indicated in a cartoon depicting the two great ministers going to the Council with fingers on lips. Seeing no sign that their chief was prepared to resist the policy of preferential tariffs, and being ignorant that he had its promoter's resignation in his pocket, four Free Traders—the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Mr. Ritchie and Lord George Hamilton—sent in their own resignations after a second Council on the following day. The Duke being then privately informed of Mr. Chamberlain's withdrawal, and having received certain assurances, was induced to remain, but his friends were allowed to go. His suggestion that they should be informed of the facts which had been communicated to himself was declined by the man who alone was

entitled to divulge them. In their conversation after the first meeting of the Cabinet, Mr. Balfour spoke of Mr. Chamberlain's resignation as possible; after the second meeting he spoke of it as probable; and it was not till the third day that the Duke learned definitely that it had been tendered and accepted. By that date the resignations of his fiscal friends had been completed.¹

'Nothing,' as Lord Rosebery said, 'like the departure of the Colonial Secretary, pairing off with his principal adversaries in the Cabinet, had been seen since Mr. Canning and Lord Castlereagh resigned in order to fight a duel.' The retirement of the one section or the other had been contemplated, but nobody predicted the simultaneous withdrawal of both. With intense curiosity the whole country as well as the uninitiated ministers perused the strange, strategic correspondence which had passed between Mr. Balfour and his powerful colleague. In the course of a letter, dated September 9, five days before the first Council at the Foreign Office, the Colonial Secretary wrote: 'I think that with absolute loyalty to your Government and its general policy, and with no fear of embarrassing it in any way, I can best promote the cause I have at heart from outside.' No immediate reply to the communication was disclosed. What Mr. Balfour published was a letter he wrote on September 16, after he had received the resignations of the Free Traders, embodying the results of conversations with Mr. Chamberlain. It was imbued with a spirit of submission and sympathy. 'If you think,' wrote the Prime Minister, 'you can best serve the interests of imperial unity, for which you have done so much, by pressing your views on Colonial Preference with the freedom which is possible in an independent position, but is hardly compatible with office, how can I criticize your determination? The loss to the Government is great indeed, but the gain to the cause you have at heart may be greater still.'

In what was regarded as 'pretty Fanny's way' Mr. Balfour reserved a significant portion of his letter for a postscript. Every one smiled on reading 'with what gratification, both on personal and on public grounds,' he had learnt that Mr. Austen Chamberlain was ready to remain a member of the Government. The young man who succeeded Mr. Ritchie in the high post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, was looked upon by some critics as a ministerial hostage for his father. On the other hand Mr. Goldwin Smith spoke harshly of Mr. Chamberlain 'leaving his son to work as his confederate' in the Cabinet. The reason for his resignation that he himself gave to Mr. Balfour was repeated on several occasions. For instance, in August, 1904, he said: 'I recognized that the Prime Minister did not go as far as I

¹ Mr. Arthur Elliot, the Secretary to the Treasury, although not in the Cabinet, followed the other Free Traders into retirement.

wished to go, and that my continued presence in the Government would mean either that I should embarrass him, or that I myself should be unable to speak freely ; therefore I went to speak freely to the country on a matter to which I attached so much importance.' Although politicians closely associated with him declared that his regard for Mr. Balfour was deep and sincere, consideration for colleagues was not imputed to the advocate of unauthorized programmes among his cardinal virtues. A plain and practical explanation of his resignation was given by one of his ablest journalistic supporters who wrote in the *Observer* that he was 'assured of sufficient support to justify him in coming out of the Cabinet.'

A sensation that rippled round the world was produced by the withdrawal of the strongest and best-known member of the Cabinet in circumstances so unusual and mysterious. Telegrams of regret came from the colonies ; and at home the event caused a shock to the supporters of the Government. Would it last long without the statesman who had been its principal pillar ? The general expectation was that it would speedily collapse, and those who distrusted the member for West Birmingham suspected that he shared that feeling. Mr. Balfour made adequate acknowledgment of the greatness of his loss. 'The place,' he said, 'which Mr. Chamberlain occupied, others may occupy, but none can fill.' He endeavoured to induce Lord Milner, who was then in Europe, to take the vacant post, but the High Commissioner preferred to return to South Africa, and the Colonial Secretaryship was entrusted to Mr. Lyttelton. Having reconstructed his Government, the Prime Minister went on in his own way with equanimity. If the Duke of Devonshire had come out at the same time as the others, the fabric might have tottered to the ground. By persuading him to remain Mr. Balfour displayed some of the dexterity in which he excelled. In a little while, the Whig leader also resigned, but before he carried out his intention the Government had recovered from the first shock, and, although its head felt the second blow, it survived.

Mr. Chamberlain's feelings were revealed in a letter to the Duke on September 21. He said that after eighteen years of loyal co-operation he was 'bitterly hurt' by the fact that his Liberal Unionist colleague at this crisis had taken others (Tory Free Traders) instead of himself to his counsels and he lamented the lack of agreement on the fiscal question. 'If the Cabinet and the Party,' he wrote,¹ 'had been united we might have faced the General Election with confidence that even if we were defeated—as I believe we should have been on Education and War Office Reforms—we should have had a policy for the future which time and discussion would have made victorious.'

¹ *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, by Bernard Holland.

He reproached his colleagues with their conduct. 'I, who for the sake of the party swallowed these camels, now find that you and others strain at my gnat! What did I ask of you before I went to South Africa? That you should retain the shilling corn duty and give a drawback to Canada. I thought you had all, except Ritchie, accepted this policy. While I was slaving my life out you threw it over as of no importance.'

To this letter a pacifying reply was sent by the Duke and thereupon Mr. Chamberlain expressed himself quite satisfied so far as any personal question was concerned. The rupture, however, which he had caused steadily widened. On October 1, a few days before his 'raging and tearing propaganda' was to begin at Glasgow, the Prime Minister intervened at the conference of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations at Sheffield. Mr. Balfour said he did not think that 'public opinion was ripe in this country for the taxation of food' on which the policy of preferential tariffs was to be based, but he called for 'freedom of negotiation' with protective countries. 'Do you desire to reverse the fiscal tradition, to alter fundamentally the fiscal tradition, which has prevailed during the last two generations?' 'Yes,' he replied to himself, 'I do. . . . I propose to alter that tradition by asking the people of this country to reverse, to annul, and delete altogether from their maxims of public conduct the doctrine that you must never put on taxation except for revenue purposes.'

The Sheffield speech provided a compromise which enabled the Tariff Reformers and the moderate Free Fooders, although with doubt and uneasiness, to continue their joint support of the Government. Free Traders of the old school, however, were alarmed, and the Duke of Devonshire now followed his friends into retirement. Although certain trimmers tried to detect hostility between the plans of Mr. Balfour and those of Mr. Chamberlain, the admiring *Times* remarked that they were 'playing the game with the perfect mutual understanding and the consummate skill of a pair of accomplished whist-players.' From that game the Duke of Devonshire withdrew. He did not share Mr. Balfour's wish to alter fundamentally our fiscal tradition. On the contrary he believed that 'our present system of free imports, and especially our food imports, is on the whole the most advantageous to the country.' It was because this system was attacked that he sorrowfully and reluctantly claimed his liberty.

Once more, then, the Whig leader and Mr. Chamberlain stood in opposite camps. For thirty years their careers had been intermingled. They met in Parliament as Opposition leader and independent Radical; they became colleagues and rivals in Mr. Gladstone's second Administration; the unauthorised programme threatened to part them for

ever, but Home Rule drew Chatsworth and Birmingham together, and a political providence came to the aid of the House of Lords, of landed property and Church establishments. From the assailant Mr. Chamberlain was transformed into the champion of existing institutions, and the comradeship of Whig and Radical proved durable and cordial. The Duke said, early in 1903, that since Home Rule brought them into closer political association he did not believe that on any single occasion there had arisen any question of serious difference between them. But now, in old age, they parted company, the Radical agitator of 1885 becoming the leader of the Protectionist Tories, and the Whig finding himself in the same path as the 'Gladstonian Liberals.' Truly it has been observed that politics are not a drama where scenes follow one another according to a methodical plan.

'A political severance—somewhat resembling in this a change of religion—should at most occur not more than once in life.' Thus Mr. Gladstone wrote in 1873 to Dr. Allon with reference to the idea of a conflict between himself and Nonconformists. 'It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!' The fresh political severance which occurred in the lives of the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain was painful to themselves and disagreeable to their fellow-countrymen; and on account of it much opprobrium was thrown on the restless promoter of a new policy by many of his Unionist friends.

XXXIX

PILGRIMAGE OF PASSION

'YOU have,' said a kindly opponent of Mr. Chamberlain, 'a powerful and popular man, a past master in the arts of political strategy, who attracts the sympathy of the country by a great display of energy and courage. You have him making a pilgrimage of passion.' At the age of sixty-seven, taking his political life in his hands, the retired minister of the crown started on the boldest and most difficult enterprise in which he ever engaged. As in the case of his resistance to Home Rule, he would, if he were an ordinary politician, have been embarrassed by his record, but he fearlessly flung away every shred of Cobdenism which would have impeded him in his propaganda. When Free Trade speeches were quoted against the fiscal reformer, he calmly dismissed them with the remark that the changes which had taken place since they were delivered fully justified a modification of our policy. He did not attempt, as Mr. Gladstone would have attempted, to prove consistency or continuity of thought. 'Altered circumstances' made such an effort, in his opinion, needless. Mr. Morley has referred, *à propos* of another statesman, to 'the desire of a true orator's temperament, to throw his eager mind upon a multitude of men, to spread the light of his own urgent conviction, to play the part of missionary with a high evangel.' It was with this desire that Mr. Chamberlain, abandoning place and salary, separating himself from the comrades of his middle age, and renouncing the opinions of a lifetime, set out to convert the country to his new doctrines.

When he opened the propaganda at Glasgow on October 6, 1903, he attracted universal attention. 'England listens to him,' truly said a writer in the *Fortnightly Review*, 'and the empire listens, whether men agree with him or not.' As he faced an enthusiastic audience, excited by his personality and by the strange development of his career, and as he stood beside his wife on the platform, watched by an army of reporters, sketch-writers and artists, the seasoned campaigner seemed for the first time in his life to suffer from nervous tension. He realized that he had raised great expectations and he was anxious to fulfil them. Although he spoke impressively he relied less on argument than usual and more on rhetoric. 'The com-

mon flag' and 'sons of the empire' and other patriotic phrases were introduced to give colour and stimulus to his oration. Protesting that under no conceivable circumstances would he consent to be put in any sort of competition with the friend and leader whom he meant to follow, he claimed the position of a pioneer in front of the army and described himself as a missionary of empire.

'I tell you,' exclaimed Mr. Chamberlain, 'that it is not well to-day with British industry.' That was the commercial basis of his argument. The protected countries had, he said, progressed in an infinitely better proportion than ourselves; our imperial trade was absolutely essential to our prosperity; if that trade declined, or if it did not increase in proportion to our population and to the loss of trade with foreign countries, then we would sink at once into a fifth-rate nation; our fate would be the fate of the empires and kingdoms of the past. In return for a very moderate preference the colonies would, he asserted, give us a substantial advantage; not only would they enable us to retain the trade which we had, but they were ready to give a preference on all the trade which was now done with them by foreign competitors. While admitting that in order to have a preferential arrangement with them we must put a tax on food, he asserted that nothing that he proposed would add one farthing to the cost of living of the working man or of any family. He would put a duty on foreign corn, not exceeding two shillings a quarter, and no duty at all on the corn coming from British possessions. Any loss to the Exchequer he would make up by retaliation or reciprocity; he would levy an import duty on all manufactured goods, not exceeding 10 per cent. on the average, and varying according to the amount of labour in the goods.

'Now the murder was out,' Mr. Chamberlain remarked with a sarcastic smile, when he unfolded his scheme at Glasgow. It was developed on the following evening before another great and excited audience at Greenock. Here he made a confession of faith. He was brought up in the pure doctrine of Free Trade, but in thirty years everything had changed; 'politics have changed, science has changed and trade has changed.' He wanted to have free exchange with all the world, but if they would not exchange with him, then he was not a Free Trader at any price.

The materialist view of politics which the former preacher of the gospel of humanity had adopted in his transformation period was presented in a new form. Political reforms were first abandoned, and now some of the social reforms which had been substituted for them were cast into the pit of insignificance. 'Free education, the Factory Acts, mining regulations, fair wages clauses, compensation for accidents, all these are good, all of them have been of great advan-

tage, but they are nothing in comparison with any policy or any legislation which would insure full employment, continuous employment at fair wages ; and if your employment is filched from you, if you have to accept starvation wages, if you have to give up the advantages which you have obtained, *then I tell you that your loaf may be as big as a mountain and as cheap as dirt*, and you will be in the long run the greatest sufferers.’¹ To support the plea for change he gave a terrible account of lost or decaying industries : ‘Agriculture has been practically destroyed ; sugar is gone ; silk is gone ; iron is threatened ; cotton will go.’ Unfortunately for his propaganda, several of these industries, instead of disappearing, revived and prospered.

Replies and recriminations came fast and furious. Free Traders of the Liberal and the Unionist sections vied with each other in their efforts to defeat the new crusade. Mr. Asquith, at whom Mr. Chamberlain repeatedly sneered as a lawyer unfamiliar with business, was the first as well as the most persistent of his critics, and presented the case against retaliation and preference with precision and cogency. The struggle brought Lord Rosebery out of his lonely furrow and into active association with fellow Liberals. ‘Well, what do you think of it all ?’ he asked, in his gay manner, at Sheffield. He described Mr. Chamberlain’s ideas as a mass of glittering soap bubbles, and contended that a preferential system founded on the taxation of food would tend to dislocate and probably to dissolve the union of the empire. Hostile tariffs should be fought, in Lord Rosebery’s opinion, by a more scientific and adaptive spirit—by better education ; above all we must keep the universe for the sources of our raw material and food.

‘Dumpophobia’ was very prevalent in the early stage of the fiscal outbreak. Annoyance had been caused in industrial circles by the dumping of surplus foreign manufactures on this country and Protectionists played with considerable effect on that feeling. Thus there was spread the fever which Mr. Asquith ridiculed by the name of ‘dumpophobia.’ Mr. Morley, however, told the men of Lancashire that there was no dumping which could be so deadly for them as dumping new Custom-house officers on their shores. If certain industries as was asserted were injured by the landing of surplus foreign stock at low prices, Free Traders pointed to others which prospered and even depended on the raw material thus cheaply obtained.

Meantime another lease of notoriety was obtained by Mr. Chamberlain. People who took little interest in politics were excited by the

¹ Jorrock in *Hillingdon Hall* (Surtees) : ‘Gen’lemen, cheap bread’s a capital cry, but wot’s the use o’ cheap bread to the poor man if he harn’t got no money to buy it with ?’

courage with which he turned his back on old beliefs and old companions, and set out on a new crusade ; the speeches which he delivered and the accounts given of his meetings stirred the public fancy like stories of great battles. Pictures of the celebrated man adorned shop-windows in every street, and his photograph formed button-hole badges, and was found in Christmas crackers. He became again the hero of the music-halls and theatres. A verse from 'The John Bull Store' will serve as an example of the laudatory effusions which were encored :—

Our Joe is straight and square, and he's always played us fair
When we've trusted him with jobs before,
So we'll help him all we can, and we'll find that Joey's plan
Is the saving of the John Bull Store.

In 'The Orchid' at the Gaiety Theatre an actor, made up to resemble Mr. Chamberlain, was applauded when he sang :—

Pushful, pushful, I'm so pushful,
First I take the bird in hand,
And then I catch the bushful.

Jingle in praise of 'Joe' was introduced into the pantomimes ; and an actress went on tour with a monologue puffing his policy. The monologue was recited before the drop-scene, and at the end of each verse the curtain was raised to disclose a large portrait of the Tariff Reformer and a chorus of working men in their shirt-sleeves.

Day after day, and week after week, the newspapers contained articles on the various aspects of the controversy. The propagandist was as fortunate as usual in securing the support of the press. Several of the Unionist journals which began by attacking his policy were purchased in his interest : others modified their opposition ; and one or two veered round to his cause. Only a few, with the *Spectator* at their head, remained steadily and doggedly against tariff 'reform,' as tariff reaction was called. As a rule the Unionist press gradually assisted, or acquiesced in, the new movement. On the other hand, for a couple of years Mr. Chamberlain received no aid from any statesman of the front rank. No one of more importance than Mr. Chaplin threw in his lot with his cause, and Mr. Chaplin prejudiced it in the eyes of waverers by lifelong Protectionist sympathies. At the new crisis in his career the lack of able lieutenants told heavily against the promoter of programmes.

Nevertheless the combined opposition of Unionist Free Traders and Liberals failed to modify his attitude. He who had fought Mr. Gladstone was not alarmed by Mr. Asquith or Mr. Ritchie.

Think you a little din can daunt mine ears ?
Have I not in my time heard lions roar ?

When his figures were proved inaccurate he said they were merely

illustrations ; when his arguments were disputed he emphasised them in a heightened manner. By great meetings he kept his views before the country. At Newcastle, on October 20, he insisted that 'without these preferential tariffs you will not hold the empire together.' Next day at Tynemouth he repeated his latest recantation. He admitted again that he had changed his opinion, but contended that circumstances had entirely altered in twenty years. Other nations had grown up under the protective system, and instead of being ruined had prospered more and more. This was his main defence for his repudiation of the doctrines of Mr. Cobden ; and so, from town to town, he carried the wintry message that our—

Trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay.

A reasoned and skilful defence of Free Trade which assisted to educate public opinion was given by Lord George Hamilton, who at the close of a long official career in the Conservative party rose above his reputation. During the previous twenty-five years the average rate of wages had increased 12 per cent., and the price of the principal foods consumed by the wage-earning classes had fallen about 45 per cent. It was, Lord George argued, this combination—a small actual rise in wages, and a great increase in the purchasing power of every shilling earned—which had enabled us to hold our own in the industrial competition of the world, and at the same time to clothe, feed and maintain the artisan and labourer at the highest standard of comfort that prevailed in any country in Europe. Following Mr. Chamberlain to Newcastle, Mr. Asquith in turn replied to his contention that trade had been stagnant for the last thirty years ; he pointed out that we did the carrying service for foreign countries, and in thirty years our tonnage of ships had increased by 100 per cent., and in proportion had been the increase in the volume of trade done. At the same time he said with authority that Liberals did not wrap themselves in the inertia of a complaisant optimism ; they wanted a reconstruction of the educational system from bottom to top, a grappling with the problems of the tenure and taxation of land, both in town and country, a substitution of insight, foresight, prudence and economy for waste, rashness and blundering in the forming and conduct of our national policy. This was the Liberal alternative to tariff reform.

An undertaking which Mr. Chamberlain gave at Liverpool on October 27 was ridiculed by his opponents. 'I pledge myself,' he said, 'that my proposals will not add one farthing to the cost of living of any family in the country.' Who was he, asked his critics, that he should expect to bind future Governments or fiscal forces by a personal pledge ? In his Radical era he had refused to take a Salisbury on trust, and now in his Tariff days Free Traders refused to take a

Chamberlain on trust. One of them likened his language to that of Jack Cade, who boasted of what he was to do 'when I am king, as king I will be.' Mr. Chamberlain summed up the whole matter in 'employment'; he sneered at the cosmopolitan aspect of Cobdenism; he appealed to the working classes against the Trades Union Congress, which had proved hostile; and although, on October 27, 1881, he attributed the extraordinary advance of the shipping industry to our entire freedom of trade, now on October 27, 1903, he contended that because we could not retaliate against foreign bounties and subsidies, British shipping was not progressing so fast as foreign.

Among the veterans who donned their armour to fight the foe from Birmingham was Sir William Harcourt, in his old age one of the most influential and best-loved figures in Liberalism. Although his strength was failing, his blows were still hard and sure. He dealt with Mr. Chamberlain's contention that other countries had increased their exports more rapidly in proportion than we had. 'Of course they have,' he said; 'a baby grows quicker than a man; they are infants in trade compared with us; we are the old-established firm; if a firm with millions adds another million it cannot say that it has increased by 100 per cent.; but a firm which has £100 and adds to it £200 has increased at the rate of 200 per cent.' Sir William dealt also with the complaint that our imports greatly exceeded our exports. 'Our imports have to pay, first of all, for our exports; secondly, for the interest on the money that has been lent to foreign countries; and thirdly, for the carriage of the goods which is conveyed for all the world by the shipping and mercantile marine of England.' On this point Mr. Chamberlain had answered himself twenty-two years previously. Ridiculing the idea of increasing our exports by lessening our imports he said in 1881: 'It seems that if we wish to attain the height of national prosperity we can do so if we only contrive somehow or another to reverse the conditions which Mr. Micawber laid down as constituting the height of individual felicity. Mr. Micawber said that if your incomings were £20 and your outgoings £19 19s. 6d. the result was happiness, and that if your incomings were £20 and your outgoings £20 os. 6d. the result was misery. This is precisely the result which the Fair Traders desire to produce in our national relations.'

The comedy of the two loaves was produced by Mr. Chamberlain before a huge audience at Birmingham on November 4, when his speech reminded an admiring critic of the triumphs of Demosthenes. Free Traders had gone up and down the country warning the working classes that the new policy meant a little loaf. Taking advantage of some exaggeration in their case, the skilful platform performer got a friend, an Alderman, to bake two loaves, such as would be sold at the

same price with the tax and without it. That is to say, he wished to illustrate the exact difference which would be made in the size, if the proposed duty on corn were followed by an equivalent reduction in the quantity of bread. With a dramatic air he displayed on the rostrum the two loaves. 'I do not know,' he said, 'whether your eyes are better than mine, but when I first saw these loaves, I was absolutely unable to tell which was the big one.' Of course the eyes of his audience failed to see what his could not see. On this occasion, flatly contradicting what he had said in the same place eighteen years before, Mr. Chamberlain denied that Protection was immediately followed by starvation and destitution, or that Free Trade necessarily brought prosperity. He disputed the assertion that Protection was the cause of the bad trade before the repeal of the Corn Laws, and he declared that the subsequent prosperity of the country had very little to do with the introduction of Free Trade.

'To go the whole hog,' a phrase used by Lord Goschen at Liverpool, became one of the battle cries. While prepared to acquiesce in retaliation in certain circumstances, those who agreed with him, he said, were not prepared to go the whole hog.¹ The phrase provided a popular description for the thorough-going Chamberlainites, who became known even in the House of Commons as whole hoggers. Lord Hugh Cecil contrasted with them the 'little piggers' or moderate men who supported the temporizing policy of the Government, but although 'little piggers' amused the House, the name did not share the favour of the other phrase. Lord Goschen nettled the Tariff Reformer by the keenness and vigour of his criticism. 'On a former occasion we differed,' said Mr. Chamberlain, with an allusion to the struggle over the franchise and the unauthorized programme; 'and I think it is a good augury that on that occasion I proved to be right and Lord Goschen proved to be wrong.' Nevertheless, his ancient adversary, in a sanguine, confident spirit, although without rancour, steadily went on refuting economic fallacies.

The relations of the Prime Minister with Mr. Chamberlain continued to be the subject of constant speculation and discussion during the autumn campaign. Their correspondence in September had led to the belief that they were in sympathy, if not in co-operation, and frequent reference was made to the comparison which *The Times* had drawn between the two statesmen and a pair of accomplished whist-players, but while Tariff Reformers assumed that the Prime Minister was their secret friend, the moderate Free Fooders clung to him for support. A compact or truce, arranged between Mr. Balfour and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, was celebrated at Bristol in November, when the Conservative

¹ The old ostler in *The Romany Rye* said when one became a highwayman there was nothing like 'going the whole hog.'

chief visited the city which the latter represented. Here he advocated merely the power of retaliation ; and his friend, although a professed Free Trader, declared himself in favour of this policy. Strange to say, Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at Cardiff a week later, 'accepted' Sir Michael's declaration on the footing that half a loaf was better than none. The Free Trader took the Prime Minister's arm to detach him from the Tariff Reformer, but the Tariff Reformer kept hold of the other arm and tried to look as if he were pleased to see him in such company. How happy the statesman with unsettled affections would have been with either, if the other were away !

Fresh cause of irritation was given to the Unionist Free Traders by a taunting comparison. Rigby in *Coningsby* denounces as un-English all the views with which he is not in agreement, and in the same spirit Mr. Chamberlain stigmatized an argument used by fiscal opponents as a craven argument, worthy of the Little Englander. Early in 1899 Mr. Chamberlain described the 'Little Englanders' as men who honestly believe that the expansion of this country carries with it obligations which are out of proportion to its advantages. Later he alluded to them as 'friends of every country but their own,' and in platform controversy the phrase bore the more offensive meaning. The taunting comparison was at once hotly resented by Mr. Ritchie, who said it was little short of an outrage. 'It inflicted,' he said, 'a slur on men who were actuated by as high motives as Mr. Chamberlain was.' Mr. Morley too disclaimed the description. 'I am not a Little Englander,' he protested, 'but I am an Old Englander, and old England knew very well what she was about.' The member for West Birmingham, however, persisted in treating the controversy as a test of intelligent patriotism ; and in reply to protests from Unionist Free Traders, he said sneeringly 'they seem to me to be Imperialists in theory and Little Englanders in practice.' Sir Michael Hicks-Beach retorted in his biting manner that he was an Imperialist when Mr. Chamberlain's doctrines did not go beyond Birmingham ; and Lord Rosebery also claimed to be an Imperialist at least as old as Mr. Chamberlain and at least as sincere.

Unionist colleagues by whose side he had fought in many battles took part in an imposing demonstration against his new policy, held under the auspices of the Unionist Free Food League, on November 24. This meeting, in the Queen's Hall, recalled the gathering in Her Majesty's Opera House in April, 1886, at which the Duke of Devonshire appeared for the first time on a public platform in the company of Lord Salisbury. Several statesmen who accompanied the Duke to the Opera House were with him also in the Queen's Hall. In the long interval they had become old and weary, but though the Duke's hair had grown grey 'the finger stroke of Time' was scarcely per-

ceptible on his forehead ; his face retained a healthy hue, his figure was erect, and his voice strong. On the platform were as many as twelve Unionists who had held office. There were differences as to the extent to which a policy of retaliation might be pushed, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach going further in this direction than some of the others, but all were opposed to a protective duty on food. It was with a stern air that their leader denounced Mr. Chamberlain's propaganda. The Prime Minister had said that the taxation of food was not the policy of the Government. 'And I hope to Heaven it never will be!' exclaimed the Duke.

It was as 'a drag on the wheel' that the chief of the Cavendishes now figured in the picturesque language of the statesman who formerly called him Rip Van Winkle. Mr. Chamberlain had recently said : 'Things move quickly nowadays. Maybe the Duke is also moving with them. His last intimation was that he was not opposed to the Government, but he hoped to be a drag on the wheel. That is a curious ambition.' The Duke, at the Queen's Hall meeting, good-humouredly showed the usefulness of his new function : 'The drag is not an unimportant part of the mechanism of a motor-car or locomotive. It is an important, and sometimes a necessary part. More than ever it is necessary now, when the engine-driver has got down and allowed another to take his place, and when the other is running the locomotive at full speed down the line and against all the signals.' A palpable hit at both Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain !

'Are you to take foreign tariffs *lying down*?' the advocate of the new policy had asked. 'Lying down' became one of the familiar phrases of the fiscal school ; it was tossed backward and forward. Lord Goschen played with it in the Queen's Hall : 'What do these warlike champions recommend us to do ? To stand up ? No ! but to crouch behind a wall. British trade was no longer to sally forth and meet the foe, but to build fiscal martello towers around the coast and arm them with guns which were spiked forty years ago !' Thus the veterans fired into one another, and although there was not yet so much bitterness as in the case of the Home Rule split, gibes were sometimes used which caused resentment. For instance, Mr. Chamberlain ridiculed the idea of Mr. Ritchie being accepted as a great financial authority merely because he happened to be under the tuition of the permanent officials of the Treasury for a few months. Naturally the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer regarded this remark as a personal affront. It was an offence also to the officials whose new political chief was Mr. Chamberlain's son.

The appointment of a Commission, at the close of 1903, under the auspices of the Tariff Reform League, provoked much sarcasm. Serious people treated it as an infringement of the royal prerogative : others made fun of 'King Joseph.' A newspaper announced that

the Court would shortly be removed to Birmingham with Mr. Austen Chamberlain as Minister in Attendance; another published a picture of Josephus Rex, seated on the throne, wearing a crown and royal robes with 'our right trusty Counsellor,' Mr. Jesse Collings, behind the new Sovereign. The Tariff Commission was appointed to consider the conditions of trade, and the remedies for the alleged depression. It entered gravely on its elaborate inquiry, but the country arrived at a decision without waiting for the result of its self-imposed labours.

Still another declaration of his new faith was made by Mr. Chamberlain at Leeds on December 16. In 1882 he had contended that what was called one-sided Free Trade was absolutely the very best that could be devised with regard to British interests. Now he described himself as a Free Trader, in the sense that all trade should be free; and he asserted that what was commonly called Free Trade was not fair competition. 'Give us Free Trade; we have never had it,' he cried. The cry was taken up by his followers and repeated all over the country: 'We have never had Free Trade; we have had only free imports; we are not against Free Trade; it is real Free Trade that we want.' In earlier years he had been 'unable to distinguish between what the Fair Traders called "real Free Trade" and what the rest of the world called Protection.'

'Learn to think Imperially,' was the advice which the passionate pilgrim offered at the Guildhall in January, 1904. 'A brilliant scene: a dull speech' was the record made of the event at the time. On Mr. Chamberlain's last formal visit to the City of London the streets were thronged with cheering people, but on this occasion there was no crowd, except in the Guildhall and its vicinity. He was received with flag-waving, with 'Rule Britannia' and the National Anthem: honours which brought down upon him the banter of Free Traders whose Sovereign was King Edward. The Board of Trade figures for 1903, which had just been issued, with their record of progress, were set against the lamentations of the statesman whom Lord Rosebery described as a 'modern Jeremiah'; but, consistent in his new argument, he retorted that the greatness of a nation was not measured by comparison with its own past but by its relative position among the countries of the world. We might, he said, decline as a nation, and yet 'wallow in comparative luxury.' His speech in the City was the least successful in his winter tour. It lacked the dash of earlier efforts. A sympathetic critic, explaining the restraint of the audience, remarked that the conditions of the meeting implied an attitude of critical reserve; the appeal was rather to the intelligence than to the emotions. Signs of physical exhaustion were apparent in the orator's manner, and it was arranged that he should leave England for a holiday soon after the beginning of the session.

MANŒUVRES IN PARLIAMENT

AT the opening of the session of 1904 the ex-Colonial Secretary took his seat below the gangway on the right of the Speaker. It was here on the same third bench that he sat during the Liberal Ministry of 1892-95. Now he found himself in the company of Mr. Chaplin, the latest and strangest ally of one who had been the bogey of the landed aristocracy. Almost at his elbow across the gangway was Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. The two statesmen might have easily put their heads together. Narrow, however, as was the physical partition, there was between them a wide political gulf. Mr. Chamberlain had opponents not only confronting him but also at his side. This had been his experience when he sat here formerly, but then the opponents near him were Liberal Home Rulers, whereas now he was among the Unionists who had cheered him for seventeen years, and some of whom had become his bitter fiscal foes.

The severest personal mortification suffered by a debater who seldom gave quarter was inflicted on him early in February. It was part of the harvest of the war, which had contributed so greatly to his ascendancy. In the course of recrimination on a subject which had begun to weary the Unionists, Mr. Chamberlain recalled that a few months before hostilities took place Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman said there was nothing to justify military preparations, although he knew at that time, not merely through his own information, 'but through other information that came to him' that our force in South Africa was not complete. This mysterious reference to 'other information' gave his adversary an opportunity for playing a strong card. The Liberal leader had been on the outlook for such an opening, and he seized it eagerly. 'Does the right honourable gentleman,' he asked, 'refer to a correspondence between himself and me?' Mr. Chamberlain, although obviously embarrassed by the question, did not shrink from 'Yes.' Next day, with his permission, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman gave an account of the conversation recorded in chapter XXXI. of this volume. The point of it was that in June, 1899, a few months before the sending of the ultimatum, Mr. Chamberlain said: 'We know that those fellows (the Boers) won't fight. We are playing a game of bluff.'

An enormous sensation was produced by a disclosure which threw a fierce light on events preceding the war. Radicals and Nationalists expressed pent-up hatred in mocking cheers at what they considered the recklessness and miscalculation of an ambitious imperialist. With brain and body wearied by his fiscal propaganda, he was disconcerted by the exposure which he had brought upon himself. He stated, amid jeering laughter, that he could not charge his memory with a contradiction of the use of the word 'bluff,' although it was not one he was likely to have used. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman pointed out that immediately after their conversation he told one or two of his colleagues the gist of it and reported the same phrase to them; and his recollection was confirmed with a nod or a cheer by Mr. Asquith and Mr. Bryce. On the Unionist side, however, Mr. Chamberlain was heartily applauded when he declared that he had no idea whatever of bluffing in the sense in which the leader of the Opposition considered he had used the word. The wonder was that he gave his antagonist an opportunity of disclosing the incident. Sir Henry had several times set a trap. For instance, on October 15, 1903, he said: 'I have heard of the Minister of a great State who tried to bluff a neighbouring state with which he was engaged in negotiation.' The word 'bluff' was then obviously in his mind as one damaging to the chief champion of the war policy, and now he was fully justified in quoting it in reply to the taunt against himself, supported as that was by reference to a private conversation. Mr. Chamberlain's conduct indicated less than his customary alertness of mind.

Another blow fell on him the same evening. 'The truest and most unselfish of friends,' Mr. Powell Williams, suffered at the House of Commons an apoplectic seizure, which proved fatal. Mr. Williams was one of his confidential colleagues in Birmingham life and in political work, and was Chairman of the Management Committee of the Liberal Unionist Association. The sudden stroke was felt keenly by a statesman whose mourning inspired Mr. Morley with a tribute to his friendship. The day after the funeral, which he was not able to attend, he left for Egypt. People who met him at this period realized that he was physically exhausted and that he could not add much more to the incessant work of a long and strenuous life. But to use his own phrase he was 'not dead yet.'

The sessions of 1904 and 1905, so far as the fiscal question was concerned, were spent by the Government in the marking of time. A direct issue was evaded by the Prime Minister with a dexterity which foolish flatterers applauded, while Mr. Chamberlain refrained from forcing a crisis. The downfall of the Administration was predicted month after month, in spring and summer, for a couple of years, but still the Unionist ministers continued to sit on the Treasury bench.

For the prolongation of their existence they were indebted in a great measure to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. Although some of his friends were very uneasy, the Tory Free Trader appeared to be content with the assurances he had received from Mr. Balfour. 'In any circumstances,' he said on one occasion, 'I should not desire to replace His Majesty's present Government by right honourable gentlemen opposite, and I will never desert the Government of my country at such a crisis as the present may be in our foreign affairs.'¹

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had, during a long career, played a conspicuous part in Parliament, but more than once when he reached a dominating position he showed he was not of the stuff of which great leaders are made. His deeds were seldom so firm as his words, and although he carried the character of a dour, unbending man, he flinched at a crisis. Lord Randolph Churchill forced him to the front in 1885, in order that he might supersede Sir Stafford Northcote in the leadership of the party, and in 1886 he gave way to Lord Randolph. In his last office as Chancellor of the Exchequer he was, by his own confession, overruled in financial matters by his colleagues, and in resisting the approaches to a system of preferential tariffs he was less staunch than his successor, Mr. Ritchie, whose Parliamentary reputation did not stand nearly so high as his own.

Tall, thin, reticent, and moody, with quick temper and sharp speech, fair-minded and dignified, a country gentleman born to politics, a strong Tory, tossed between fiscal convictions and party inclinations, Sir Michael was in these latter days a curiously lonely, discontented figure. He had persuaded himself that the Prime Minister was unfriendly to the Birmingham policy; he supported him in office, in the belief that time was against the Tariff Reformer; and the section of Conservatives known as the Free Fooders, who were neither Cobdenites nor Chamberlainites, were pleased to suppress their scruples and to follow so easy an example. Only twenty-nine Unionists went so far at the opening of the session of 1904 as to vote with the Liberals for an amendment condemning any return to Protective duties. Of these a section drifted to the other side of the House; the others continued to act with the Government, while opposing Preference, based on the taxation of food.

A skit on the Chamberlain propaganda which greatly amused its opponents was given in a speech by Mr. Asquith in the form of a short manual of *Protection for Beginners* :—

What is Free Trade?—A shibboleth.

By whom was it invented?—By one Adam Smith, a professor; but a later writer, Carlyle, is a much safer guide.

How then did it come to be adopted as part of the policy of this country?—

¹ Our ally, Japan, was at war with Russia.

Through the machinations of a middle-class conspiracy, headed by one Cobden, whose main object was to lower the wages of labour.

How has the superstition managed to survive?—Because there are people simple and short-sighted enough to imagine that in foreign trade it is well to receive more than you give.

How have we escaped ruin?—By the mercy of Providence.

How are we to set ourselves right?—By waiting for the report of the Tariff Commission.

The Prime Minister, in March, defined his position by saying that it was not proposed to deal with the fiscal question during the currency of the present Parliament and that the policy of the Government did not include the taxation of food. This formula eased the consciences of Free Fooders and at the same time Tariff Reformers winked at it because it did not bind the Government to hostility to their cause after the then existing Parliament. The one section continued jealously to watch the other. When a Conservative Free Fooder proposed to meet a Liberal motion with an amendment explicitly declaring that the Government policy did not include 'either a general system of protection or a preference based on the taxation of food' the Tariff Reformers threatened revolt, and the amendment in which the party managers had acquiesced was abandoned. Neither section was prepared to take the responsibility of turning Mr. Balfour out, unless forced by his decided action. The Liberals hoped, and expected, that the one or the other would lose patience, but the Prime Minister, now to this and now to that side leaning, was equal to every emergency.

When Mr. Chamberlain returned from Egypt in the middle of April with bronzed face and improved health, politicians speculated on his attitude with respect to the time-serving Ministry. 'What will he do with it?' asked the *Spectator*. The question was answered by events. His son's first budget was produced; he would not dismiss the Government, even if he could, so long as it was before the House; and the bill embodying it was delayed till an unusually late period of the session. Instead of risking an open quarrel with Mr. Balfour by action in Parliament he devoted himself to organization and to the advocacy of his cause on the platform.

A taunt of cowardice—not, it was explained, physical cowardice—was levelled at the Tariff Reform leader by Lord Hugh Cecil, who was sitting in front of him, on May 18, in a debate which produced angry recrimination between the different sections of Unionists. Lord Hugh, commenting on his refusal to bring his fiscal policy to a straight issue in the House of Commons, likened him to Bob Acres, whose courage was shown elsewhere than on the field of battle. Mr. Chamberlain in an offended tone said he regarded moral cowardice as much worse even than physical cowardice, and he boasted, with truth, that through-

out his career he had never been unwilling to express his views in the plainest terms whether they were popular or unpopular. Feeling on the Unionist side ran very high throughout the summer, and even some of the Free Fooders who voted with the Government betrayed resentment against the disturber of party peace, while the thorough-going adherents of Cobden's doctrines assailed him on every possible occasion. On the other hand he secured the sympathy of the great majority of the party. At a banquet at which he was entertained on his sixty-eighth birthday, 177 members were present, and twenty-three others had intended, if they were able, to join in the celebration. All the hosts wore Mr. Chamberlain's favourite orchid, but the flower was not a badge of rebellion. 'Above all,' he protested, 'we are the friends and admirers of the Prime Minister.'

In organization Mr. Chamberlain lost no time or opportunity. His policy was adopted by many Conservative associations throughout the country and he captured the Liberal Unionist machinery. In such a contest the head of the Cavendishes was no match for the inventor of the English Caucus. The Duke of Devonshire's position as President of the Liberal Unionist Association, which had done so much to resist Home Rule, became intolerable, seeing that it gave support to branches which passed resolutions in favour of a policy of which he disapproved. He desired its dissolution, but in May 1904 it was reconstructed on lines agreeable to Mr. Chamberlain who succeeded to the chief place, the new Council recommending preferential arrangements between the colonies and the mother-country. At a meeting held in the Royal Albert Hall on July 14, to celebrate this transformation, four Cabinet Ministers were on the platform. The fact that two of them, Lord Lansdowne and Lord Selborne, took office in a Council which supported a policy not within the official programme, led to debates in both Houses. Their defence was that they acted as individuals, and that the Government were not committed.

Controversies on the introduction of yellow labour into the Rand increased the virulence of the session. Reflections were cast on Mr. Chamberlain's administration by Liberals who complained that his South African policy was resulting merely in the enrichment of the mine-owners. By letter and speech he concurred in the ordinance for the recruitment and importation of Chinese, which had been passed by the Transvaal Legislative Council, and sanctioned by his successor, Mr. Lyttelton. When he was in Johannesburg he expressed repugnance at the idea of the employment of yellow labour but undertook that no opposition would be offered by the imperial authorities if it were desired by the great majority of the white inhabitants of the colonies; and now he assumed that the Government had satisfied themselves that this condition was fulfilled. The ministers main-

tained that on account of the shortage of natives for the mines the introduction of Chinese was necessary to avert a financial crisis. Liberals, on the other hand, denied that it was necessary or that the people of the Transvaal had been consulted in an adequate manner. Dislike of a system with the taint of slavery added to the unpopularity of the Government, and politicians continued to hint that a foreboding on this subject may have influenced Mr. Chamberlain in deciding to escape from Downing Street.

One of the few speeches which he delivered in Parliament in 1904 was on the motion to closure the Licensing Bill by compartments. As in the case of the Education Act, he was silent during debate on its merits (except on a single point in Committee), and intervened only to support the 'guillotine.' Although he had brought himself into touch with Conservative sentiment on the drink question by resisting Sir William Harcourt's Local Veto scheme, the latest of the social reforms of the Unionist Ministry could not have been quite agreeable to him. Authority for reduction of licences on grounds of public policy was transferred from the local magistrates (except in great boroughs) to the Quarter Sessions. To this change the Liberals were strongly opposed; and although the compensation for loss of licence was to be provided from a fund raised by the trade, they complained that the system shackled the State and that the number of reductions would be limited by the amount of the fund, instead of the fund being determined by the number of reductions required in the public interest. Another objection to the bill was that it would give a perpetuity tenure to a very large number of licences. Liberals demanded a time limit for compensation, and increased duties on licences, but Mr. Chamberlain, who in 1885¹ was willing that the whole of this great question should be left absolutely to the local authorities, gave the Opposition no support. On the contrary, he adopted the familiar device of an attack on the extremists. He recalled that his first considerable speech in the House was devoted to temperance reform; he declared that he had not in the slightest degree changed his opinions; he preserved an intense sense of the importance of reform; and the fact that practically nothing of substantial importance had been done by legislation was, he held, due mainly to the extreme views of men who absolutely refused to adopt 'that great principle in politics'—that half a loaf is better than no bread.

Meantime his fiscal propaganda underwent a change. At the outset he was moved by the belief that his policy was the only method by which we could secure a real union in the empire. If it were merely a question of trade, as he told Mr. Bonar Law on the day after his first Birmingham speech, he would have left it to younger men. Grad-

¹ Trowbridge, October 14, 1885.

ually, however, his propaganda showed a tendency to turn from great imperial objects to pure protection ; and in the course of his campaign he used arguments 'pick'd from the worm-holes of long-vanish'd days,' sneering at 'the idol of the free importers' and at 'the superstition for an antiquated policy good enough in its day.'

The agricultural virtues of tariff reform were expounded by its leader in August, 1904. At a meeting at Welbeck, held in the Riding School of the Duke of Portland, and attended by about 13,000 persons, the presence of a great number of territorial magnates gave occasion for many gibes at the statesman who had derided those who 'toil not neither do they spin.'¹ Here he renewed his proposal to put a two-shilling duty on every kind of corn except maize, which was an important feeding stuff ; such a duty on flour as would result in the whole of the milling of wheat being done in this country ; and a duty of five per cent. on meat, dairy produce, butter, cheese and preserved milk, as well as on poultry, eggs, vegetables and fruit. These duties would, as he contended, be paid by the foreigner, and the money thus raised would go to reduce the cost of tea and sugar—and he hoped tobacco. His policy, he promised, would result in more profit for the farmer, more employment for the labourer and cheaper food for the family. Two months later, at Luton, he addressed another great meeting with another Duke (His Grace of Bedford) in the chair, and enthusiasm was excited among a portion of the audience by his programme.

A couple of days before this engagement the Prime Minister, who went on refining while others were acting, hurriedly intervened with a speech for which occasion was found at a club dinner in Edinburgh, declaring that he was not a Protectionist, and that if the party took up a Protectionist line he could not with advantage be its leader. Mr. Chamberlain, at Luton, also light-heartedly repudiated the name of Protectionist. He was still determined to carry the Prime Minister with him, but the audience slyly laughed at his repudiation and applauded the idea that foreigners should pay a 'toll' to us for keeping open to them the greatest market in the world. A concession which he obtained with regard to the summoning of a colonial conference consoled him for any protest. *Punch*, in November, exhibited Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain as the fiscal freaks. Bohemian freak-twins were appearing at a music hall and it was difficult to know whether to speak of them as one or two persons. The fiscal twins, in the attire of music-hall performers, with bodies united but with separate heads and limbs, sang the song of the tariffs. 'Now then, Artura,' said Josepha, 'take the time from me.' The popular idea,

¹ Circumstances had changed since 1874, when he mockingly said he did not expect to find the nobility and gentry flocking into Sheffield to hear him address a meeting in the square.

in spite of occasional disclaimers, was that the Prime Minister was taking the time from his ex-colleague.

Happy expression was given by the same satirist to another aspect of the controversy soon after Mr. Chamberlain's return from a sojourn on the Continent, when the official statistics for November showed a fresh monthly record in our foreign commerce. The specialist in trade diseases, as he draws off his gloves turns to Dr. Chaplin and inquires concerning the state of the poor British sufferer. 'Debility nicely maintained?' he asks. 'On the contrary,' says the family doctor, 'I'm afraid you'll find him in a deplorably robust condition.' The periodical returns by the Board of Trade were indeed the most effective arguments against the new proposals. Mr. Chamberlain, however, did not abandon the effort to reconcile them with his pessimism. Although 1904 was a record year even in exports (which were the favourite Protectionist test of prosperity), he pointed out that in the same period pauperism had increased, crime had increased, and the number of people who were by no fault of their own out of employment, also had increased. He was determined to be gloomy.

He was also determined to repress the joy of his exulting opponents. Methods of vulgarity were attributed by him in a speech at Limehouse to the leaders of the Liberal party. This was a variation of the 'methods of barbarism' with which Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had reproached the Government in the conduct of the war. The 'First Gentleman in Birmingham,' as he had been called by a colleague, was exceedingly severe in his strictures on Sir Henry's deportment. 'I ask him,' said Mr. Chamberlain, 'if he cannot be a patriot to try to be a gentleman.' A few days later, in the same place, the censured statesman reproached his censor for a little failing in the matter of temper, which he attributed to the fact that his stock-in-trade as an agitator had gone. The alleged vulgarity consisted chiefly of a suggestion that the promoters of Tariff Reform desired to feather their own nests. In scouting this idea the ex-Colonial Secretary appealed to his personal sacrifices. When men gave up power, office and salary, they were not very likely, as he said, to make a profitable business of their political work. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman retorted by pointing to the Tariff Commission and saying that certain members of it were selected because the industries with which they were concerned were thought likely to benefit by Protection. Against Mr. Chamberlain himself there was no insinuation.

The session of 1905 was marked in fiscal annals by the devices and contrivances of the Prime Minister for avoiding such an issue as would expose the split in his party. He played for time, and in his playing he was as graceful as it was possible to be in such a game. At Manchester, in January, taking up a challenge thrown down by Mr. Morley, he put

his views on half a sheet of notepaper. In this historic and futile document he expressed a desire for a freedom of action which was impossible while we held ourselves bound by the maxim that no taxation should be imposed except for revenue; and secondly, he desired closer commercial union with the colonies. Adroit words could not take the place of convictions. The half sheet of notepaper did not simplify the controversy. It was interpreted differently by the different sects, each professing to be pleased. When Mr. Asquith submitted a motion to the House of Commons demanding an appeal to the country on the issue, Mr. Chamberlain declared that there was not a single point of principle in any of Mr. Balfour's speeches from which he differed, and at the same time Lord Hugh Cecil, as the champion of the Tory Free Traders, was apparently content with the maintenance of his cousin in office.

Amazing tactics, on which the bold fighter subsequently poured scorn, were adopted by the Government when Liberals by the luck of the ballot obtained opportunities for challenging their views on fiscal policy. A motion against preferential duties having been brought forward on March 8, the great Tariff Reformer himself was found 'cowering behind the cover of the previous question,' which was interposed from the Treasury bench. A fortnight later, when protective duties were challenged, a more unusual contrivance was resorted to by the Prime Minister. Amid the jeers of his opponents he announced that the Government and their supporters would abstain from voting on abstract resolutions dealing with a policy which was not before Parliament. Their flight from the House was likened by Lord Hugh Cecil to the retreat from Moscow; and the result was that the Liberal declaration against Protection was carried by 254 votes to 2. When a motion against retaliation was next submitted only a few Unionists out of the strong force which was formerly so valiant attended the sitting, and they slipped out before the division; so that Mr. Balfour's official policy was condemned *nemine contradicente*. Still another boycott being practised in the case of another debate, the Commons recorded resolutions against every phase of new fiscal doctrine. Although the propagandist silently took part in these flights and dodges, he told his constituents in the recess that such tactics were 'more humiliating to ourselves as a great party than any I can recollect in the course of my political experience.' 'I was afraid of my friends,' retorted Mr. Balfour.

While Mr. Chamberlain's policy was thus trifled with by the Government, severe reflections were cast on his colonial statesmanship, on account of the failure or delay of the Rand financiers to fulfil their promise. The arrangement was understood to be that we were to lend £35,000,000 for the development of the conquered territories,

and that £30,000,000 was to be raised by them as a contribution to the cost of the war. We had carried out our part of the bargain, and the Government were reminded several times that the men with whom Mr. Chamberlain negotiated at Johannesburg had not discharged theirs. He was ridiculed for bringing home 'Aladdin and Monte Cristo stories,' and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach cruelly remarked that he had recommended the acceptance of £30,000,000 instead of pressing for a larger contribution on the plea that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush. His successor at the Colonial Office preached patience, and he himself said on May 24 that it was most offensive to assume that the financiers did not mean to carry out their obligations. The doubts of Radicals, however, were not dispelled, and the famous tour in South Africa lost its glamour.

The Aliens Bill, which was the chief legislative measure of 1905, was boldly treated by Mr. Chamberlain as if it were a branch of his own new policy. Although its responsible authors denied that it had a protective object, the Fiscal Reformer insisted on praising it as an effort to protect the British workman against underpaid aliens. There was only a short step, in his view, between such a bill as this and a measure which he hoped to see introduced to prevent the goods made by underpaid labour abroad from coming into competition with our own. Ministers were badgered on account of this embarrassing support, and Mr. Balfour gratified the Liberals by saying he did not regard the exclusion of undesirable aliens as a branch of the fiscal question. The remark sounded like a snub to a pushful partner.

DISRUPTION AND DISASTER

THE fiscal issue, although disaster did not follow so swiftly as in the case of the introduction of Home Rule, cost the party of the statesman who raised it an enormous price in *personnel*. For several years it divided leading Unionists into different groups, several separating themselves from the official organization, and a larger number substituting a sullen indifference for cordial support. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was probably influenced by 'fiscalitis' in deciding not to stand again for election to the House of Commons; Mr. Ritchie and Lord George Hamilton abandoned the attempt to retain their seats; and many other respected, experienced and influential Conservatives refused to face a contest with dissension in their local associations. Bitter controversies among members lowered the prestige of the party in Parliament, and in the country the intrigues and quarrels of the rivals for the control of the machinery impaired its efficiency. The popularity of the Government fell steadily, and bye-election after bye-election was lost. Still more significant and weakening was the conversion of young and able men to Liberalism. Clumsy army projects and Chinese labour contributed to this process, but the chief agency was Mr. Chamberlain's propaganda, assisted as it was by the attitude of the Prime Minister.

So rarely do successive generations of a family show equal distinction in politics that we still wonder at the two Pitts. Mr. Winston Churchill, who entered Parliament with a rich political inheritance, gave proof before he was thirty of ability to renew his father's fame. His instinct for the game at St. Stephen's, and his audacity in playing it, were equal to Lord Randolph's, and he became a still greater master of invective. Mr. Churchill was driven from the Unionist side by the intolerance of colleagues who rather than listen to denunciation of ministers by the son of a former leader withdrew from their benches or shouted like angry apprentices in a theatre gallery. In May, 1904, the young man took his seat on the Liberal side, and he was followed by several others, including Major Seely, whose earnestness was equally unsuccessful in securing a hearing for protests against the proceedings of the Government. On the other hand Lord Hugh Cecil, the most brilliant son of the Marquis of Salisbury, who had been gathered to his

fathers at Hatfield, although closely associated with Mr. Churchill in fiscal affairs, could not break from his party. By Free Traders within its ranks he was bid aspire to the leadership, and he in turn appealed to political friends not to link Toryism with Protection. Questions affecting Church and schools were sufficient to deter him from changing sides.

Personal antipathy to Mr. Chamberlain had been revived in its fiercest form. Men who realized the dangers of a tax on corn, and who recalled the solemn warnings against Protection which he uttered in former days, were irritated by what they considered his levity and recklessness; and animosity was increased by his scornful treatment of political opponents. This feeling was displayed even in so small a matter as his right to a private room at the House of Commons. Surprise was expressed when it was discovered that after he ceased to hold an official position an apartment was still set apart for him. 'Why should this be so?' asked Radicals and Nationalists. 'Was he not a private member?' This they asked in order to annoy one who did not spare their own feelings. Lord Balcarras, the urbane representative of the Office of Works, explained that he occupied the room as leader of the Liberal Unionists and that a similar privilege was enjoyed by the Chairmen of the Irish party and the Welsh. Thereupon those who pretended to complain of the arrangement replied that the Liberal Unionists were merged now with the Conservatives, and did not, like the Welsh or Irish, appoint a chairman or leader of their own. In the case of no other prominent statesman would such a controversy have been raised. There is usually a sentiment of comradeship and even of generosity among Parliamentary combatants, but Mr. Chamberlain provoked ungenerous passions.

For Mr. Balfour too the feeling in those trying times became unsympathetic. In the earlier years of his leadership he exercised a certain personal charm. His dignity, his courtesy, his smile produced a pleasant impression, and his most objectionable proceedings excited in Liberals no personal resentment. With a long spell of power and increasing cares, however, he appeared to harden and grow callous. Opponents might have pitied him in the embarrassments which he owed to Mr. Chamberlain had it not been that their hearts were moved to anger and contempt by his manœuvres. Even on his own side his conduct caused irritation. For a world out of joint he was not resolute enough. His metaphysical speeches ceased to amuse, and his clever tactics for concealing the deepening split in the party were applauded only by the friends, of mediocre ability, with whom he packed his Government.

The project of a colonial conference led to one of those complex controversies and curious imbrolios which excite the politician and

exasperate the ordinary human being. When Mr. Chamberlain, in the latter days of the session of 1904, suggested the summoning of a conference on the fiscal question, the Prime Minister said he did not propose to take any steps with that object 'at the present moment.' This refusal, although given in reply to another member, was regarded as a rebuff to the Tariff Reform leader; and rebuffs were never meekly endured by a man who believed in hitting back. In the autumn Mr. Balfour relented. At the club dinner in Edinburgh, at which he declared he was not a Protectionist, he agreed that a conference with the self-governing colonies and with India should be held and that it should not be fettered by special views or special instructions. Tariff Reformers were gratified by so important a concession and specially by the freedom of the conference (which would be at liberty to recommend the taxation of food), but as a set-off the Prime Minister laid down the condition that it should be summoned only after the dissolution of Parliament and that any plan it adopted should be submitted at a second election. This check was intended to relieve the fears of the Free Fooders, but for them Mr. Chamberlain had no consideration. At Luton, two days after Mr. Balfour spoke at Edinburgh, he described the promise of a conference as a great advance, but on a point of tactics he deplored the delay which would be caused by a double plebiscite. Would Mr. Balfour, every one wondered, give way on this point also?

Controversy on the subject was reopened in 1905 by Mr. Brodrick's remark that the Government proposed to hold a colonial conference on the subject of Preference in 1906. At once the Prime Minister was bombarded by the Free Traders with questions. Did he intend to summon a conference before the Election? If so, would that not be a breach of his Edinburgh pledge? In the most amazing of the replies of a perplexed statesman he pleaded that he was not bound to the *Liberal party* by what he said at Edinburgh; and he explained also that when he spoke there he did not have in his mind the fact that a conference would be held automatically in 1906. On a motion for the adjournment Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman called the attention of an agitated House to what Free Traders regarded as a breach of a plain pledge, and when Mr. Lyttelton, instead of Mr. Balfour, rose to reply, the Opposition would not listen. A scene of disorder lasted for an hour, and was ended only by the Deputy-Speaker declaring the sitting at an end. In a defence of his strange conduct which he gave at a party meeting in the Royal Albert Hall Mr. Balfour intimated that the whole scheme of a double plebiscite would fall to the ground if he and his friends were not returned to power at the next election; and as there was no expectation of a Unionist victory, the controversy which had raged so fiercely lost its immediate interest.

A statement, however, was made at the Albert Hall meeting which

Mr. Chamberlain interpreted in a manner very favourable to his own views. The Prime Minister, after expounding the official policy of Retaliation, turned to 'the other branch of the fiscal question,' and in a misty sentence remarked that this was 'the greatest and most important and—for reasons based mainly upon colonial sentiment—the most urgent of all the great constructive problems with which we have to deal.' Out of this passage Mr. Chamberlain drew something very tangible. Speaking on the following night at St. Helen's, he found in it 'an official programme to which I most heartily subscribe.' He interpreted the oracular Mr. Balfour as having said that Tariff Reform would be the most important part of the Unionist policy; that colonial preference was the most important part of Tariff Reform; and that colonial preference would therefore be the first item in their future programme.

Lucid, precise, emphatic speech is a valuable as well as a rare talent, but it is dangerous when applied to the doctrines of a priest who wishes to lead rival sects, and the Prime Minister's feelings may not have been angelic when he read the unauthorized version of what he had said. No sooner did the Tariff Reformers drag him forward than the Free Traders tried to pull him back. They raised debates in both Houses. The Prime Minister, greatly irritated by the jealousies of the warring claimants for his favour, remarked that those who wanted to know his views had better get them from his own speeches and not from the speeches of others. At the same time he said it was perfectly obvious that fiscal policy stood in the front of the Unionist programme; consideration of our commercial relations with the colonies must be the most important part of the programme, and this necessarily involved the summoning of a free conference. Thus Mr. Chamberlain was able to claim that in all essentials Mr. Balfour occupied the same position as himself. With such manœuvres, and with wordy contrivances which seemed petty and vain in the light of subsequent events, the leaders of the Unionist party seemed always to approach but never to reach a public understanding.

As a Parliamentarian Mr. Chamberlain played an inconspicuous rôle since his return from South Africa. In 1904 he voted in only forty-eight divisions out of 341, and in 1905 in only seventy-three out of 364. From the time that Mr. Balfour became Prime Minister he showed little interest in any subject except that in which he was directly concerned, and after the raising of the fiscal question he gave only a perfunctory support to the Government. He made no effort to stem the tide of unpopularity which was running so strongly against it. With increasing impatience and with a contempt for official timidity which he expressed to his friends, he waited for his own opportunity of an appeal to the country, conferring with friends in the Lobby and steadily organizing.

A long autumn holiday was taken by Mr. Chamberlain at the close

of the session of 1905, and when he returned the Tariff Reform movement was quickened. In a speech at Birmingham on November 3 he demanded a dissolution at the earliest possible moment. On several occasions during the previous eighteen months he had said that the sooner an election came the better he would be pleased. Now he became much more urgent. Members of the Government were talking of another session of the old Parliament in 1906 and of a Redistribution Bill, but Mr. Chamberlain was eager to get into close conflict with his opponents on his own subject. He told his people at Birmingham that he would infinitely 'rather be part of a powerful minority than a member of an impotent majority.'

A resolution practically approving of his policy was carried, with only a few dissentients, at the meeting of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations on November 14. The Prime Minister, confronted with this declaration, appealed to the party for union, but the appeal was made in vain. Several Tariff Reformers, including Mr. Chaplin, continued ostentatiously to push their programme, and their leader insisted on a forward policy. 'You must not,' he said at Bristol, 'suffer it to be whittled down by the timid or the half-hearted minority of our party. . . . No army was ever led successfully to battle on the principle that the lamest man should govern the march.' Instead of modifying his views, he repeated them in the most uncompromising form: 'You cannot have retaliation without a general tariff, . . . you cannot have preference unless you will give your kinsmen a preference on their chief products, even though these products include the principal part of the food of this country.'

Ministerial journals in London treated Mr. Chamberlain's Bristol speech as an event which would compel Mr. Balfour to reconsider his position. Pretence of agreement was for a brief period cast aside. The most consistent press supporter of the official policy scolded the ex-Colonial Secretary in a tone to which he was unaccustomed in high Unionist quarters.

Circumstances (said the *Daily Telegraph*), are stronger than individuals, and circumstances have at last forced Mr. Chamberlain into open and avowed rivalry with the Prime Minister. An inborn taste for unauthorized programmes, a temperament which frets and chafes in the harness of party discipline and expediency, and an enthusiastic band of disciples, alert, able, but rather inexperienced and raw, explain Mr. Chamberlain's attitude. But it is possible that he has misinterpreted the silence maintained, under much provocation, by Mr. Balfour's supporters, in face of the attacks, depreciation and sarcasm which have been levelled at the leader of the Tory wing of the Unionist party, day by day, week by week and month by month in organs which are controlled by Mr. Chamberlain's more injudicious admirers.

Naturally the Tariff Reformers resented this admonition. They boasted of the forbearance with which *they* had treated the Government, and they declared their intention to take henceforth their own

course. Their leader himself spoke of the Prime Minister with undiminished friendliness—with the friendliness which he professed for Mr. Gladstone when advocating an independent programme. 'It has been one of the privileges of my long political career,' he said at Oxford, 'that I have been associated for many years with Mr. Balfour out of office and in office. I have been proud to work with him in Opposition. I have been proud to work with him and under him in the Government, and during the whole of that time there has never come between us any difference which has in the slightest degree affected our personal friendship or our political relations.' (In June, 1885, Mr. Gladstone was 'the greatest man of his time,' and in July, 1886, he was 'making an abject surrender to a vile conspiracy.')

At last the dissolution, desired equally by Tariff Reformers and by Liberals, was secured. A dramatic protest by Lord Rosebery against a sympathetic allusion to Home Rule from Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman encouraged Mr. Balfour in his design to throw upon his opponents the duty of forming a Government at an inconvenient season. Mr. Chamberlain was well pleased by his resignation, which took place early in December, and on the appeal being made to the country in January, 1906, he spoke with his usual vigour and boldness and did what he could to inspirit the feebly-led Unionists. Even the organ which a short time previously accused him of rivalry with Mr. Balfour now stated that 'it is as false as it is foolish to assert that there is any disagreement' in the party; and except for a small section of thorough-going Free Traders, who were repudiated as Cobdenites, there was ostensible unanimity in the advocacy of fiscal or tariff reform. But by these vague words all who repeated them did not mean the same thing.

The kaleidoscopic character of Mr. Chamberlain's own views of the project with which he went to the country is exhibited by the following statements—

June 3, 1903.—I would not myself look at the matter unless I felt able to promise that a large scheme for the provision of old age pensions to all who have been thrifty and well-conducted would be assured by a revision of our system of import duties.

July 8, 1904.—I am a fiscal reformer mainly because I am an imperialist.

November 21, 1905.—I give you a headline for my policy. . . . It is: More work for the people of this country and a closer union between the different parts of the empire.

January 1, 1906 (Election Address).—A policy which has for its sole objects increase of employment, the development of our resources and the consolidation of the empire.

Several statesmen who had held high office in Unionist Administrations stood aside from the party conflict or cast their influence in favour of the Liberals. The Duke of Devonshire and Lord James of Hereford advised their friends not to vote for Tariff Reformers; Sir Michael

Hicks-Beach, who had been created a Viscount, was silent ; Lord George Hamilton sought no seat ; Lord Goschen was almost as afraid of Radicalism as of Protection, but his Free Trade arguments remained in the minds of voters ; Lord Balfour of Burleigh was expelled from the Constitutional Club for signing a circular in support of a Liberal candidate ; and although Mr. Ritchie, with a peerage just conferred upon him, died on the eve of the election, his protest against a food-tax was remembered.

The followers of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who had formed a strong Government of all the Liberal talents except Lord Rosebery, entered into the contest with enthusiasm. Mr. Balfour's seat in Manchester was challenged by Mr. Winston Churchill, who although only an Under-Secretary, attracted national attention by his candidature. Free Trade, hatred of Chinese labour with a taint of slavery, and opposition to the denominational character of the recent Education Act were powerful factors on the Liberal side, and a great national uprising took place, one of its most significant features being the success of an independent Labour party. So much rancour and excitement prevailed at this crisis that there were twice rumours that Mr. Chamberlain had been assassinated. He was denounced as a reckless politician who for his own ambition was prepared to tax the bread of the poor. Birmingham stood by its celebrated citizen, but while he took his own regiment safe out of the battle, with its flag flying, the decision of the country was pronounced by a sensational majority against the late Administration, many notable Tariff Reformers falling in the fight and the whole Unionist force suffering—

Ruin upon ruin, rout on rout.

Seven of the ten members of the resigned Cabinet who sat in the House of Commons were defeated, Mr. Balfour himself, with the fate of the Laodicean, being ejected by the constituency which he had represented for twenty years. There were 369 Unionists in the House at the dissolution ; after the election there were only 157. Mr. Chamberlain was taunted by opponents and some friends with having wrecked another party. According to Mr. Goldwin Smith he meant to drive Mr. Balfour on the rocks. ' This he did. But the vessel was driven on the rocks too hard.'¹

In 1886 Mr. Chamberlain had deprived the Liberals of power, and since then, except for a brief unhappy period, he had kept them out of office. Now they were avenged !

¹ *Reminiscences by Goldwin Smith.*

COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

AS a colleague Mr. Chamberlain, although suggestive and fertile in counsel, may have been, like Carlyle, 'gey ill to live wi'.' The charge of disloyalty, brought against him in turn by Nationalists, by estranged Radicals, and by Free Trade Conservatives, was never supported by any one with whom he had acted in a Cabinet. What colleagues complained of was not that he intrigued against them but that he publicly advocated his own views without regard to their feelings, and that after leaving them he commented on their proceedings unfairly. The Duke of Devonshire, who served with him under three Prime Ministers, declared in 1903 that he had always found him 'not only an able but a loyal colleague.' Mr. Gladstone's biography was searched by Mr. Chamberlain's enemies in the expectation that some reflection upon his conduct might be found even in its discreet pages. Their expectation was not gratified. The most personal allusion is in a letter to Lord Acton, dated January 13, 1887, and the note, although suggestive, is tantalizing in its vagueness. 'It is,' wrote Mr. Gladstone, 'with much pleasure that I read your estimate of Chamberlain. His character is remarkable, as are in a very high degree his talents. It is one of my common sayings that to me characters of the political class are the most mysterious of all I meet, so that I am obliged to travel the road of life surrounded by an immense number of judgments more or less in suspense, and getting on for practical purposes as well as I can.'¹ Probably the mass of material placed at the disposal of Mr. Gladstone's biographer contained comments or allusions for which a journalist would have given a fortune, but their disclosure was unnecessary for Mr. Morley's purpose. Mr. Chamberlain was a more 'facile' colleague of the Conservatives than of the Liberals, for in the Administration of 1880 he was at war with the Whigs, whereas the Salisbury Government was disturbed by no sectional rivalry. It was only during the last few months of his official life that the Unionist Cabinet was divided into groups, and till he raised the fiscal question he worked amicably with the other ministers.

There is no evidence that Mr. Gladstone's relations with Mr. Chamberlain were at any time thoroughly cordial and confidential. The

¹ *Life of Gladstone*, by John Morley.

Liberal chief, magnanimous as he was, may never have forgotten that the Radical Mayor of Birmingham described his election address in 1874 as the meanest public document that ever proceeded from a statesman of the first rank ; his old-fashioned habits of reserve in official business were at variance with the ministerial methods introduced by Mr. Chamberlain, and his sense of discipline was offended by the advocacy of the unauthorized programme, while on the other hand he did not adequately recognize his colleague's ability. Between 1876 and 1886 the younger statesman made many flattering references to the older, but after the latter year there was little opportunity for friendship, and although their last messages were messages of kindness and charity, and Mr. Gladstone scarcely ever expressed resentment, the recollection of bitter controversies could not be effaced from the memory. It is easy to write on that tablet, but it is as hard to rub off the stabbing, wounding words as it was for Lady Macbeth to wipe the blood spots from her hands.

In his allusions to his first chief, Mr. Chamberlain displayed a painful contrariety. In 1874 he wrote that the Radicals were not disposed to 'take him back' without questions being asked ; in 1876 he urged him to put on once more his well-dinted armour ; in 1882 he described him as the noblest figure in English political history and testified that so far from being a tyrant there was no man so ready to receive suggestions or so anxious to appreciate the case of an opponent ; in 1883 he said his retirement would be an incalculable misfortune for his country ; in 1884 he eulogized 'the great chief of whom I am proud' and said, 'our noble cause has a noble leader' ; in 1885 he declared that Mr. Gladstone was remarkable for his personal character and for the high tone that he had introduced into our political and public life, and predicted that he would stand out before posterity as the greatest man of the time. In 1886 Mr. Chamberlain's opinion of Mr. Gladstone changed with his point of view. Not only did he charge him then with making an abject surrender to a vile conspiracy, but in 1890 he described him as an imperious leader and said his Home Rule policy was conceived in secrecy, born in deceit and nurtured on evasion ; in 1892 he denounced him as a furious mob orator ; in 1893 he jeered at the Liberals for erecting his name and age into a fetish and regarding his voice as the voice of a god.

With the Duke of Devonshire he was associated longer than with any other statesman. They served together in the Liberal Cabinet from 1880 to 1885, and in the Unionist Administration from 1895 to 1903 ; and in the interval between 1886 and 1895 their relationship was as close as that of colleagues in office. Their comradeship under Mr. Gladstone had been marred by a lack of sympathy and by conflicting views, but after a few years of common hostility to Home Rule the

one fully recognized the good qualities of the other. While the Duke properly appreciated the value of his colleague's services and induced their allies to accede as far as possible to his wishes, Mr. Chamberlain rebuked those who twitted the Whig leader on what he owed to his birth, and declared that the public confidence in him was due to his ability, courage, English virtue, and a straight-forward honesty; in 1890 he bore testimony to his sound judgment and true patriotism; in 1895 he referred to the modesty and self-effacement which had been the distinguishing characteristic of his public career; and in 1901 he paid another tribute to his wise counsels. In 1903, alas! he resumed the tone of an earlier decade, and taunted the possessor of those qualities on going down to posterity as the drag on the wheel.

Lord Salisbury and the Radical who joined his Government never mocked one another with effusive compliments. For ten years their personalities enlivened if they did not embitter political controversy. From his early Liberal years till the days when he loved Mr. Gladstone less than any Conservative, Mr. Chamberlain flung many gibes at 'the true representative of the inveterate prejudices' of the Tory party, and Lord Salisbury in turn flouted his doctrines with equal trenchancy. Neither controversialist, however, was hurt by sharp words, and although the alliance begun in 'the little dingy downstairs room' at the Turf Club in 1886 may not have obliterated the past from their minds, they did not bear any malice or grudge. The Tory leader was able to certify in 1894 that there was no taint of confiscation in anything that the former advocate of ransom then proposed, and in 1899 his old Radical adversary stated that nothing they ever said of one another had prevented their cordial co-operation. If Mr. Chamberlain did not favour his Unionist chief with such panegyrics as he had pronounced on Mr. Gladstone, neither did he, on the other hand, defy him with an independent programme. There is no proof that at any time he disturbed Lord Salisbury's phlegm.

Between Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Chamberlain many hard buffets were exchanged. In 1876 the Radical member for Birmingham asserted that the ex-Solicitor-General was sedulously divesting himself of every shred of Liberalism, but he soon knew him better, and their political comradeship developed into a personal friendship which survived even the stiff battles of later years. Sir William Harcourt became, after the Home Rule split, 'the chameleon,' the swordsman whose 'sword is always at the service of the strongest faction,' 'the Bombastes Furioso of contemporary politics.' Mr. Chamberlain, in turn, was 'a bad loser'; he was found lacking in good breeding and courtesy towards his opponents, he was accused of personal rancour and venomous hostility, and he was likened to Sir Anthony Absolute. Yet he and Sir William continued, although at increasing inter-

vals, to joke and dine together. The South African war put a new strain on their friendship, but there was no rupture. One of them, at any rate, shared the sentiment expressed to Lord Jeffrey by Christopher North: 'The animosities are mortal but the humanities live for ever.' On one occasion when the member for West Birmingham was a guest at Malwood, Sir William Harcourt's residence in the New Forest, and the house party were writing their names in the visitors' book, the page was full when it came to his turn. 'Now, Chamberlain,' said Sir William, 'here is the chance of your life to turn over a new leaf!' 'I'm hanged if I will,' replied Mr. Chamberlain, and he inscribed his name in the margin at the top.

From suspicion and disdain the relationship between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain changed to warm regard. They were as the poles asunder in temperament and in tastes. On the one side the nephew of a Marquis, and on the other the son of a boot and shoe merchant; on the one side a mind which wandered in philosophic mazes, on the other a direct business intellect; on the one side a man of languid manners, on the other a man of restless, aggressive activity; on the one side a nature which sought relief in music and literature, in golf and tennis, in cycling and motoring, and on the other a nature concentrated on politics. Ambition matured more slowly in Mr. Balfour than in Mr. Chamberlain, but ultimately grew as strong, and perhaps the secrets of the first five years of the twentieth century will prove that the life-long Conservative was the subtler of the two statesmen who were placed almost in the position of rivals. Their comradeship, first as allies and later as colleagues, was one of the political marvels of modern history, and was due on the one hand to the skill of the Cecils, and on the other to an undying hostility to the Gladstonian Liberals. The friendship of men so unlike may have been strained by the fiscal propaganda, but for several years it proved an important factor in the government of the State. For no politician on either side did the member for Birmingham show a warmer regard than for the Conservative leader whose party was wrecked on his policy.

Less animosity existed between Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Chamberlain than their caustic allusions might lead a reader to suppose. The statesman whom friends called 'C.B.' till initials were considered excessively familiar for a Prime Minister was too easy tempered to be a good hater, and the keenest fighter in public life did not as a rule regard an open political opponent with personal dislike. Sharp recriminations passed between them, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman ruling his adversary out of honourable society and Mr. Chamberlain appealing to Sir Henry to try to be a gentleman. Such taunts were the outcome of passing moods. Both were able to act in the generous spirit of Dr. Johnson. Although Johnson was a

strong Tory, and declared that the first Whig was the devil, yet, as a Liberal of our time points out, his relations with the greatest Whig writer and politician of his day were marked by a cordiality, respect and admiration that never wearied nor wavered. Mr. Chamberlain was capable of thorough respect for a stout, steady foe, and reserved his harshest feelings for men who went tiger-hunting with him a little way and then turned back. Of no contemporary did he speak with more acrimony than the colleague who after acting with him against Home Rule made peace with Mr. Gladstone and re-entered the fold of the faithful. His tone rasped with contempt when he described Sir George Trevelyan as the most perfect specimen which the process of natural selection and the development of the species had produced of the political weathercock. 'Sir George,' he said on another occasion, 'is full of fine platitudes and noble sentiments. He is the Joseph Surface of politics.'

To his enemies Mr. Chamberlain alluded in his ripe years with complacency. 'I would sooner have the hate of any man than his contempt,' he boasted in 1899, and he declared that there were some persons (including politicians) by whom it would be better to be hanged than praised. His sentiments in this respect remained the same as they were in the early days when he quoted Tennyson's reply to Christopher North :—

You did late review my lays,
 Crusty Christopher ;
 You did mingle blame and praise,
 Rusty Christopher ;
 When I heard from whom it came,
 I forgave you all the blame,
 Musty Christopher ;
 I could *not* forgive the praise,
 Fusty Christopher.

At a banquet in 1900 Sir William Anson referred humorously to the fact that Mr. Chamberlain was not one of those of whom all men spoke well. 'Of course I yearn,' he replied with a mocking smile, 'for that universal popularity, but in the meantime I can say with a poet of the end of the last century :—¹

Friends I have made, whom envy may command,
 But not one foe whom I would wish a friend.'

Lord Rosebery, who frequently exchanged badinage and raillery with him, remarked at a City feast that 'he has many friends, and I think he may be pretty constantly made aware he has some enemies.' In an amiable mood he responded by saying he was glad to reckon Lord Rosebery among his personal friends, and, 'as to the enemies of whom he speaks, I shall never take the trouble to count them.' With equal

¹ Charles Churchill (1731-64).

charity, in 1902, noting that he had been described as the best-hated person of the time, he assumed that the phrase was used in a Pickwickian sense. At all events, he said, political animosities in this country were very much the crackling of thorns under the pot. The fire burned fiercely and brightly for a minute and then died down. 'For myself,' he continued, 'I hope and I believe during what may be called perhaps a fighting career, I have never cherished personal animosity to any man, and I have always known how to separate in our political differences the public feeling from the private character.' On other occasions, however, he exulted in the antagonism which he excited. 'During all the time I have been a public man,' he said complacently rather than by way of complaint, at the end of 1905, 'I have been a cock-shy for all my political opponents. I have been accused of every public crime and almost of every private iniquity. Sometimes I have wondered whether I was fit for civilized society.'

For a quarter of a century, indeed, Mr. Chamberlain was regarded by one section or another with greater personal dislike than any other member of Parliament. As a Radical minister he was dreaded and detested by Tories who considered that he was a dangerous demagogue, guilty of reckless language; when he separated from Mr. Gladstone and opposed Home Rule he was hated—the word is not too strong—by a large number of the Liberals and by the Nationalists; and when he proceeded to split the Unionist party on the fiscal question he was equally distrusted and disliked by a few at least of the Conservatives who had formerly acted with him. But why this personal feeling? It was due partly to the personalities which he himself used and which sprang from the intensity and force of his disposition; and partly—perhaps more largely—to the suddenness and completeness of his changes. His sincerity was doubted, ambitious motives were attributed to him, and he was found lacking in consideration for others. Men attached to parties and leaders were irritated by his indifference to the ties which bound them, and as he showed contempt for those who would not follow himself the frail human nature of the ordinary politician yielded to animosity. It was really in the force of his character that the provocation lay.

Testimony, on the other hand, to his capacity for friendship has been borne in striking words by the eminent writer and statesman from whom he parted politically in 1886. In the *Life of Gladstone* Mr. Morley has recorded that Mr. Chamberlain 'always had his full share of the virtues of staunch friendship,' and in a speech in February, 1904, even when much tried by his repudiation of the doctrines of Cobden, the biographer of the great Free Trader remarked, 'I have known the member for West Birmingham for half a lifetime. During all those years I was in close and intimate relations with him, and I

don't think I will allow any differences of opinion upon public questions to prevent me from saying that he possesses in a most marked and peculiar degree the genius of friendship—sincere, kind and staunch friendship.' This declaration was cavilled at by some of Mr. Morley's colleagues, who had found it difficult 'to gather the honey of friendship out of that thorn-guarded plant,' and it was all the more notable on account of the sharp passages which had occurred between themselves. No person criticized Mr. Chamberlain with more candour than the friend who went so far in 1891 as to accuse him of hitting below the belt; and he in turn likened the man whom others called 'Honest John' to Mr. Pecksniff in politics. He attributed to Mr. Morley 'a burst of Pecksniffian eloquence,' and added truly that 'Mr. Pecksniff in politics is not an attractive character.' Yet kindly feelings were not driven out by these hard sayings, and the friendship of half a lifetime was maintained.

Another of Mr. Chamberlain's intimate comrades of early days for whom he cherished kindly feelings was Sir Charles Dilke, a statesman of great ability and vast information who by his own conduct deprived himself of the opportunity of giving to the State the full benefit of his talents. Seldom have politicians displayed such mutual consideration as these two. Neither would take office without the other in 1880; and in December, 1882, when the Government was being reconstructed, and Sir Charles Dilke's claims to a Cabinet place proved overwhelming, Mr. Chamberlain offered to give up to him the Board of Trade 'which he much liked and take the Duchy which he did not like at all.' In response to his letter conveying this suggestion Mr. Gladstone wrote 'a hearty line to acknowledge the self-sacrificing spirit in which it is written.'¹ Sir Charles Dilke did not season his arguments with personalities. For about a quarter of a century he was opposed to Mr. Chamberlain, but through good report and evil report the recollection of older days when they were Republicans and Radicals together softened the political controversies in which they became engaged.

While others testified that he never forgot an enemy, Mr. Chamberlain himself boasted that he never deserted a friend, and it was notorious that he could be relied upon to stand by those who were useful to him. He was truly 'a hedge about his friends, a hackle to his foes.' 'As one grows old the worst thing that happens is the loss of friends; no newer friendship can possibly replace in all respects the older ones.' So he said in 1905, when death removed one of his oldest comrades in Birmingham, and the remark revealed how a man commonly accounted hard, shared the need of the common lot. It was a remarkable circumstance, however, that very few of his intimate friends were on

¹ *Life of Gladstone.*

an equality with himself. Nearly all were subordinates or colleagues of inferior ability, who were content to play a secondary rôle and follow where he led.

Most notable and typical was his friendship with Mr. Jesse Collings, a man of ordinary talents, five years older than himself, short of stature, with square shoulders and erect figure, amiable in temperament but bristling in defence of an honoured chief. A merchant in Birmingham, he was early associated with Mr. Chamberlain in educational and municipal affairs, and followed him to Parliament. In 1883 Sir Henry Drummond Wolff described him as the Radical leader's *alter ego*, and informed the House of Commons that he was known in their common borough as 'Chamberlain's barometer.' They were called in more dignified language 'the Radical Orestes and Pylades,' and *Punch* familiarized them to the public as Don Chamberlain Quixote and Sancho Jesse Panza. Whither the knight went his servant followed: 'I cannot help it, follow him I must; I have eaten his bread, I love him. Above all I am faithful.' Sometimes the question was asked whether like Sancho, Mr. Collings was not wiser than his master. It was suggested that the statesman who was suspected of taking his ideas from Mr. Morley and his information from Sir Charles Dilke derived his policy from Mr. Jesse Collings!

On one occasion, as Mr. Chamberlain narrated, he and his friend visited the island of Corfu, where they were conducted over a British man-of-war. As they left the ship, they passed through a double line of sailors and marines, and following in Mr. Collings's footsteps the statesman heard a small voice saying, 'There goes three-acres-and-a-cow.' With the aid of three-acres-and-a-cow Mr. Gladstone obtained office in 1886, and Mr. Chamberlain was very angry when after the Home Rule split, the Liberal chief spoke slightly of 'a certain Mr. Jesse Collings.' Probably the reference was meant to be playful, but the Don of Birmingham permitted no one to indulge in pleasantry at the expense of his squires. They, in turn, followed him blindly. A Nationalist member remarked that he would as soon go to Sancho Panza for a character of Don Quixote as to Mr. Collings for a character of Mr. Chamberlain; but the ancient Sancho was a candid critic compared with the modern.

XLIII

PERSONAL LIFE

A SOFT side has been discovered even in Mr. Chamberlain. Dr. Dale, telling a writer on the *New Age* how admirable he was in his family relations, how true in his private life, how loyal in his friendships, declared also that he was tender-hearted. As a member of the School Board of Birmingham it was part of his duty to hear complaints against teachers, and occasionally there would be little scenes; a woman would start crying. Mr. Chamberlain went to Dr. Dale and begged to be relieved of the work, for he could not stand weeping women. This sign of sensibility was given at a comparatively early age, but as late as 1902 Dr. Percival, Bishop of Hereford, said that all who were acquainted with him knew he had a warm heart 'though it was difficult to reach.' Certainly he did not wear his heart on his sleeve for politicians to peck at. It was revealed to the House of Commons, chiefly in his parental relationship.

The devotion of the two generations touched the most callous and cynical. At a public dinner at which Mr. Austen Chamberlain was entertained, the Duke of Devonshire referred to 'the simple and elementary but not unimportant fact that he was the son of his father.' To him he owed his training and rapid promotion in political life, and the father was proud of the son's industry and success. In debate in 1894 on the enfranchisement of lodgers Mr. Chamberlain said: 'I have a son who gives me the pleasure of his company at my house,' and Mr. Morley alluding to his 'happy case' remarked that everybody was glad that he should have such a lodger. Again in the following year, speaking on the Irish Land Bill, the father confessed with the same fondness: 'It is quite true that I am a landlord myself. I have only one tenant and he does not pay any rent, although he makes frequent claims for compensation. As my tenant is my honourable friend, the member for East Worcestershire, I do not think I am much prejudiced on either side of the question.' Although as a rule domestic details in Parliament shock the aristocracy, the parental pride of the fighting politician appealed to the sympathy of all classes.

The faithfulness of Mr. Chamberlain to Birmingham, and of Birmingham to Mr. Chamberlain, was like the faithfulness of man and wife.

In the world, as well as in Parliament, he stood for the Midland town,¹ and he spoke of 'my own people' as if he were a king. 'If you were ever to turn against me,' he told his constituents in 1900, 'my political career would come to an end. I have been so proud to represent my own fellow-citizens that I could not stoop to ask the suffrages of any other constituency. If you discard me I shall take my leave of public life.' At the outset of his Parliamentary career, after a short absence from home, he confessed he never thoroughly enjoyed himself out of Birmingham. He and Mr. Collings had been travelling, and they agreed there was no such city in the whole of the civilized world. To that opinion Mr. Chamberlain adhered.

During the whole of his stormy life he made it a rule to go to his Midland home as often as possible. While other members of Parliament sought excitement at each other's country-houses, or at some fashionable resort, Mr. Chamberlain spent his week-ends at Highbury. He was never bored, as so many smart people pretend to be, by provincial life. 'How should I do otherwise than love Birmingham?' he protested in 1902. 'Here is my home, here is my family life, and no man owes more than I do to the blessings of a family life. Here I have sorrowed, and here I have rejoiced, and through good and evil, through all the vicissitudes of my career, the sympathy and the goodwill of the people of Birmingham have followed it, and bound me to them by links of steel.'

Birmingham's confidence in Mr. Chamberlain was equal to his own attachment. Mr. Bright said of him in 1877: 'He has done great service in his town. There, where he is best known, he is best appreciated.' That feeling endured, and the prophet was honoured in his own district with a steadfastness rare in the case of politicians and specially remarkable in the case of one who changed most of his opinions. In *Profils anglais*, Monsieur A. Filon recalls with what caressing familiarity, with what artless, motherly or proprietorial pride, in the *chef d'œuvre* of Alphonse Daudet the electors of Roumestan speak of their favourite as 'notre Numa.' Thus the people of Birmingham were supposed by the French observer to speak of 'Our Joseph.' They spoke of 'Joe Chamberlain,' 'good old Joe,' sometimes with pride, sometimes with familiarity. Throughout the country, as well as in the Midland city, and even in the letters of statesmen, Mr. Chamberlain was 'Joe.' In almost his last speech in the House of Commons he noted that Dr. Clifford, the Nonconformist leader, 'whose personal

¹ The *Birmingham Daily Post* in November, 1902, wrote: 'Mr. Chamberlain has come to occupy a position strongly analogous to that of Mr. Bright a generation ago. At one time it could be said that John Bright was Birmingham and that his voice in the great questions of the day was the voice of Birmingham as a whole. In the controversies and developments of these later years it has been no less true that Mr. Chamberlain is Birmingham.'

acquaintance I do not enjoy,' spoke of him by his Christian name, saying they 'all knew what Joey wanted.' As a rule, however, he showed no dislike of the short name and when it was flung at him in public meetings he did not resent the liberty. Least of all did he object to it from his 'own people.'

In the affairs of his adopted town he continued to be the leader for over thirty years. 'Through all these years,' said the Rev. J. H. Jowett,¹ 'he has intimately and profoundly associated himself with everything that affects the civic life, and has initiated and taken the lead in every measure for its enrichment. I know of no great movement in which he has not been foremost among the foremost. We owe to him our university and our great hospital. He is one with the progressive life of the people, and they reap every day the benefits of his experience and energy.' The founding of the University was one of his latest services to Birmingham. Viscount Haldane has recalled that in 1898, being very anxious to get a bill through Parliament for the establishment of a teaching university in London, he went to Mr. Chamberlain, who was then very influential in the Government. Mr. Chamberlain said, 'Excellent; but, dear me, there is Birmingham.' 'And before I knew where I was,' added Viscount Haldane, 'he had got a charter through for Birmingham and a teaching university established there.' Mr. Chamberlain's speech on the ideal of a university when he started the movement was one of the most eloquent he ever delivered. His request for a quarter of a million provoked incredulous smiles, but by the autumn of 1899 the fund amounted to £315,000 and a few years later it rose to about half a million. According to Sir Oliver Lodge, the University sprang from Mr. Chamberlain's brain. It was largely through his personal influence that the scheme proved so successful, and his efforts were the more remarkable in view of the fact that the South African war was taking place at the time. Even when the Trustees were drafting the charter, which was obtained in 1900, he was with them, as the Vice-Chancellor testified, 'mastering every clause.'

The position of a tamed shrew has been attributed to Birmingham by people who did not share her hero worship.

PETRUCHIO—I say it is the moon.

KATHARINA—I know it is the moon.

PETRUCHIO—Nay, then you lie, it is the blessed sun.

KATHARINA—Then, God be bless'd, it is the blessed sun :
But sun it is not, when you say it is not.

With obedience worthy of Katharina, Birmingham followed her Petruchio in all his moods. It was Home Rule one day, Unionist the next; one day the House of Lords deserved to be abolished, next

¹ Interview in *British Weekly*.

day it was the saviour of the country ; one day Free Trade was essential to the national prosperity, next day the empire would perish if a preferential tariff were not adopted ! Through all his changes the personal belief in ' Joe Chamberlain ' was unshaken. Whatever he was, the great majority of the electors were content to be. In November, 1905, he declared that he was still a Radical, ' if you will understand the word correctly.' In Birmingham they understood the word ; they knew that Mr. Chamberlain had remained—where *The Times* placed him in 1874—in a class by himself, and as a rule they voted for him neither as Liberals nor as Conservatives but as Chamberlainites. By his candour he maintained his authority. His fellow-townsmen were pleased to be taken into his confidence and they gave him their own.

His domestic life was never exhibited to the public gaze. Once or twice the impressionist interviewer was permitted to visit his garden or sit at his table, and was hypnotized by one of the cleverest men in the world, with the result that a smiling nation learned that the real Mr. Chamberlain was not the fighter whom Parliamentarians had seen every day for thirty sessions, but an amiable grower of flowers. As a rule, however, his home was veiled from the world and only his friends saw him in the intimacy of family life. One of the most interesting glimpses of the Highbury circle was given by Lord Chancellor Selborne, who in a letter to Sir Arthur Gordon (Lord Stanmore) in October, 1889, describing a visit to Mr. Chamberlain, said that in his own family he was very agreeable, and his children were very agreeable to him ; ' which is always a good sign as to the head of the family.' Lord Selborne added that his eldest son and daughter—he did not see any of the others—were as nice-mannered young people, and as attentive to their elders, as he had ever seen ; very intelligent too, and attractive in all ways. Mr. Chamberlain informed the House of Commons in a discussion on flogging that when his boys were at a public school he took care that in no conceivable circumstances should they be subjected to that humiliation, and he ventured to say that in after life they had not proved any the worse on that account. He had reason to be proud of his sons and they were devoted to him. The younger, Neville, who for several years managed his father's property in the Bahamas and was subsequently in business at home, spoke frequently at meetings in support of his policy and proved that he had a full share of the family ability, but at the time of the writing of this book he had declined all invitations to enter Parliament.

To the lady who shared his life for a quarter of a century, Mr. Chamberlain acknowledged deep indebtedness. She never sought to play any rôle apart from him on the public stage ; she was his constant companion, going with him, as Mrs. Gladstone went with Mr. Gladstone,

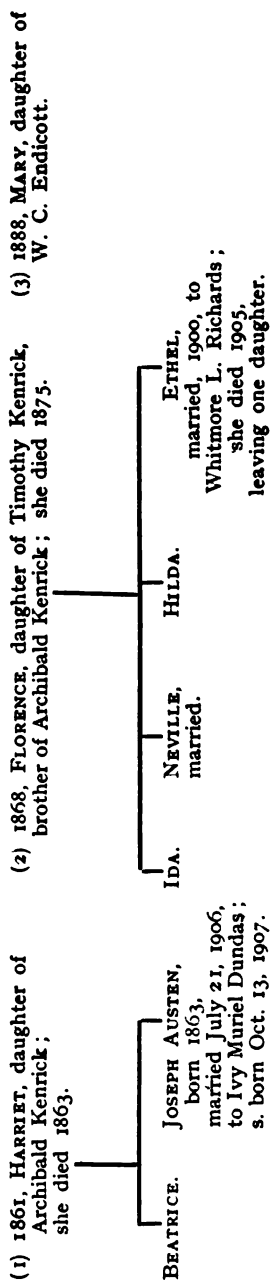
to public meetings and banquets, and encouraging him by her sympathy. Mrs. Chamberlain's smiling face and still manners charmed many an audience. It was evident that her constant care was for her husband's comfort. 'Thy people shall be my people,' she promised when she came to Birmingham, and she kept her word. At the banquet at which Mr. Chamberlain was entertained before setting out for South Africa he 'faltered and seemed likely to be overpowered with his emotion' as he thanked his fellow-townsmen for a compliment to his wife. 'She,' he said, 'who has been associated with me throughout fourteen years of arduous and somewhat excessive strain may well be associated with me now in your kind recognition. I can never say—certainly not in a public gathering—what I owe to her, but I know that during that time she has sustained me by her courage and cheered me by her gracious companionship, and I have found in her my best and truest counsel.' Again, on his return from the tour, replying to an address from his constituents, he made a similar acknowledgment. 'I am very glad,' he said, 'that you have mentioned my wife in your address, for her companionship and help have been of the greatest value to me. I do not know how I should have got through my work without her assistance and co-operation.'

His Parliamentary colleagues gratified him on more than one occasion by their recognition of his wife's noble qualities. At the dinner given in his honour by Unionist members on July 8, 1904, he was accompanied by Mrs. Chamberlain, and the chairman alluding to 'that bright and inspiring presence who graced their assembly' remarked that there was not a man in the room who was not grateful for the gentle, elevating influence which she exercised. Six years later at another celebration of his birthday at Prince's Restaurant, in less happy circumstances, Mr. Walter Long made eloquent reference to 'a great woman who had devoted herself to her husband through years of anxiety in a way which had won her the admiration of all people.'

Mr. Chamberlain was not a clubman. He belonged to several London clubs, but during the greater part of his life he seldom set foot in any of them. 'I have the idea,' he said, 'that for a married man who has given a great number of hostages to fortune, perhaps the best place for him is his own fireside, and I have reason to think that Mrs. Chamberlain is of the same opinion.' Two of his brothers who had been nominated as candidates for the Reform Club were in the spring of 1882 blackballed—by, as he supposed, a Whig clique. This unfriendly action excited the indignation of Radicals throughout the country, and their then leader was furious. 'I have made up my mind,' he wrote to a friend,¹ 'not to do anything rashly, or to give

¹ *Correspondence and Speeches of Peter Rylands, M.P.*

WIVES AND FAMILY OF JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN



the enemy a chance ; but I don't intend to let those d——d snobs have it all their own way. It is monstrous that it should actually be a disqualification for membership of a Liberal Club to have been in any way distinguished as a Liberal. I find the good people at Birmingham are furious. They will come up and storm the Club if something is not done.'

At a meeting of that historic institution in Pall Mall at which Mr. Bright and Lord Granville denounced the blackballing, Lord Hartington moved a resolution in favour of transferring elections from the members at large to a special committee. This was carried in the first instance, but on a ballot being taken it was rejected, and Mr. Chamberlain shortly afterwards resigned his membership. He was one of the promoters a few months later of the National Liberal Club, and at the laying of the foundation stone of the new building by Mr. Gladstone, in 1884, when Lord Hartington ironically referred to a report that it was to be the future home of the Caucus, the 'boss' of that organization said he did not care to dispute the soft impeachment. After the Home Rule split, however, he withdrew from the Radical resort. On the other hand in 1885 he boasted that he had 'never worshipped with the Whigs in the temple of Brooks's.' He was a member of the Athenæum, but even there he was rarely seen. Soon after leaving the Reform he joined the Devonshire and occasionally within its walls he met his friends. In 1903, the year of his fiscal volte-face, he accepted election as an honorary member of the Constitutional Club, admission to which is limited to Conservatives. Thus he was connected at the same time both with a Liberal club and with a Conservative club.¹ The fact that an ordinary person was a member of a Liberal club would imply that he was not a Conservative and the fact of his being a member of a Conservative club would imply that he was not a Liberal. Mr. Chamberlain, however, was above party.

Unlike most of his colleagues in the House of Commons he held aloof from social functions. He devoted himself to the severer side of public life. To the best of his knowledge and belief, the first time he was ever inside a bazaar was in opening one in Birmingham in 1894. Many a member envied his ability to make such a confession. In the life of the capital, apart from political duties, Mr. Chamberlain took a very slight share. Birmingham was his home ; London only a place of temporary residence. For a time he resided at 30, Wilton Place,

¹ The Devonshire was defined as 'a political club on a broad basis in strict connexion with, and designed to promote the objects of the Liberal party.' One of the objects of the Constitutional Club is 'to do all such things as, in the opinion of the Committee, shall tend to promote the interests of the Conservative party in the United Kingdom.'

but about 1880 he took 72, Prince's Gate, and subsequently he moved to 40, Prince's Gardens, a tall, narrow-fronted house in the fashionable and peaceful quarter between South Kensington Museum and Hyde Park.

His neglect of exercise astonished contemporaries in an age of athleticism and sport. Macaulay, as Sir George Trevelyan writes, was utterly destitute of bodily accomplishments, and viewed his deficiencies with supreme indifference. He could neither swim, nor row, nor drive, nor skate, nor shoot. He seldom crossed a saddle, and never willingly. When in attendance at Windsor as a Cabinet Minister, the historian was informed that a horse was at his disposal. 'If Her Majesty wishes to see me ride,' he said, 'she must order out an elephant.' Such a passage might, even in the vigour of his life, have been written of Mr. Chamberlain. 'There are men of spare habit,' remarked Sir Charles Dilke in the *North American Review* when his friend was Colonial Secretary, 'who believe that they are better without exercise. The most distinguished debater in the Government, who has an excellent seat on a horse but who is never now seen on one, and who is no mean hand at lawn-tennis, which he scarcely ever plays, is believed to hold this view.'

Till the age at any rate of fifty, Mr. Chamberlain played lawn tennis but a little later he was able to give a very complete negative list. 'I do not suppose,' he said in 1892, 'that in the whole of the United Kingdom there is any man who is less of an athlete than I am. I do not cycle; I do not ride; I do not walk when I can help it; I do not play cricket; I do not play football; I do not play tennis, and I do not even play golf, which I have been assured is an indispensable condition of statesmanship. The fact is that I do not take any exercise at all.' The allusion to golf was playful satire on the fashion set by Mr. Balfour. It was reported that on Mr. Chamberlain being taken ill during a visit to America, a doctor was summoned. 'You smoke a good deal.' 'Yes, but I make that up by never taking exercise!' On account of his disinclination for walking, Mr. Chamberlain's figure was unfamiliar on the streets of London. It was usually while sitting well forward in a hansom that he was seen here.

One of his few recreations was theatre-going. For the drama he cared more than for music. The stage may have reminded him of the House of Commons, of its pathos and clowning, of its exits and entrances, of its imposing scenes and its swift changes. Soon after his last marriage, presiding at a banquet given to Mr. and Mrs. Kendal on the eve of their first visit to America, he repudiated the arguments used by 'some of our modern Puritans who appeared to think that the stage was an ante-room to a warmer place and that it had nothing but demoralising influences.' In rather hackneyed words he expressed his

own opinion that the stage was an educational influence and an instrument of civilization. 'Each man in his time plays many parts,' said the versatile politician. No; not each man; Jaques' own words are better: he said 'one man!'

Along with other sensible people Mr. Chamberlain liked good company, and he had himself the reputation of being an agreeable companion. A prominent political opponent, who had little sympathy with him in any sphere of life, told the present writer that in country houses, for instance, he fascinated his fellow-guests. He possessed a powerful and magnetic personality and in whatever company he might be he produced what Bagehot described, in Cobden's case, as a sense of himself.

Smoking was his chief solace. He expressed agreement with the gentleman at the Magpie and Stump in the *Pickwick Papers* who said that tobacco was board and lodging to him. People seldom saw Mr. Chamberlain out of doors without a cigar—a big cigar—in his mouth. Mr. Chaplin jocularly remarked that he did not know a man who smoked more big, long, black, nasty-looking cigars. At public luncheons and dinners he would sometimes smoke during his speech. He used to tell a story against himself with reference to one of these functions in an important city. The mayor presided, and when coffee was being served he whispered to Mr. Chamberlain: 'Shall we let them enjoy themselves a little longer, or had we better have your speech now?' Mr. Chamberlain himself did not separate enjoyment from listening to or delivering speeches, and fellow-diners noted the skill with which while addressing them he could keep his cigar alight.

His health for many years excited the envy of contemporaries. He had, as he boasted in mature age, eaten ices whenever he could get them; he smoked whenever he had nothing else to do and generally when he had something to do; and he 'consumed in moderation such alcoholic fluids as he saw before him.' Yet his digestion then was as good as ever. In this respect, as in others, he was fortunate, for good digestion is no less necessary to the successful politician than a thick skin.

'You know,' said Mr. Rhodes at Capetown a year after the Raid, 'every man must do something. Some people grow orchids.' Mr. Chamberlain's orchid was almost as constant a companion as his eye-glass. Day after day in the House of Commons he wore one in his coat—an exquisite glint of colour in a sombre scene. At Highbury he occupied himself with the collection of the various species of orchids, their cross-breeding and the consequent production of hybrids and the rearing of seedlings. An eminent authority in 1914 expressed the opinion that his collection was worth £25,000. When he championed the cause of the poor certain detractors asserted with a sneer that he

favoured the orchid because it was rare and expensive. Throughout his life, however, he loved all flowers and cultivated many. Among his favourites were begonias and carnations : he devoted attention also to ferns. Mr. Chamberlain said he did not know that a man could spend pleasanter hours than in keeping a garden. 'It is certainly more pleasant,' he dared to assert at Newcastle, 'than buying a deer park or keeping a betting book.' He took great interest in Kew Gardens, and when he was in the Unionist Government he obtained an extra grant, by means of which the temperate house, one-eighth of a mile long, which had long remained unfinished, was completed.

As to his religious belief Mr. Chamberlain was, as a rule, reticent. In early life in Birmingham, as we have seen, he was an active worker at the Church of the Messiah. While mayor he was conspicuously loyal to it. One of his most noteworthy utterances on religious matters was a speech he delivered at the annual soiree of his Church in 1875, immediately after the visit of Messrs. Moody and Sankey to the town. He said the Unitarians had one fundamental doctrine—that God did not create unskilful, ignorant, frail man in order to damn him eternally for some unwitting error with regard to abstract religion. Apropos of 'what was called the revival' he referred with all respect to work which had attracted the support and admiration of men with whom it was his delight to meet and labour, but he was bound to speak in disfavour of one dogma, the fear of hell. Those who supported the movement claimed great practical results, but he thought it was difficult to give proofs of these. It might be easy to offer statistics of men who in a state of contagious excitement asserted they had made their salvation sure ; but it was another matter to follow such men up to their homes and see how far this sudden conversion had been a pledge of Christian and altered lives. At all events, the Unitarians as a body, so long as they held their present opinions, were bound to protest against the whole system. 'So long as this course of spiritual excitement and theological dram-drinking, disastrous in its results, was pursued by others, they were bound to lay before the people their alternative of the duties of life and religion and the practical results they achieved.' Although Mr. Chamberlain's attendance at service became irregular, he remained a member of the Church of the Messiah. The last time he addressed the House of Commons he spoke 'as a Unitarian' and at the autumnal meeting of the community in 1910, the Rev. Charles Hargrove, referring to his lifelong association with them said, 'Unitarians are proud of him.' To the end he was faithful to his own denomination, although, as the Bishop of Birmingham testified, he was full of sympathy for all honest religious effort.

XLIV CHARACTERISTICS

La guerre est ma patrie,
Mon harnois ma maison,
Et en toute saison
Combattre c'est ma vie.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S character is a tangle hard to unravel. Charles Lamb said of Munden, the actor, that he was 'not so much a comedian as a company.' There was a company of characters—political characters—in Mr. Chamberlain. Few actors on the world's stage have played so many parts as the London merchant's son who went to Birmingham. He completed a considerable career by the time that he entered Parliament, and while he devoted himself to politics one great *rôle* succeeded another. He was, by turn, the independent Radical, the parochial statesman, the preacher of the evangel of political humanity, the defender of the unity of the kingdom, the missionary of empire, the advocate of tariffs. He denounced with ferocity what he formerly advocated, and advocated passionately what he formerly denounced. In politics he proved

A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome.

His inconsistency or versatility was supposed by opponents to spring from a selfish grasping at power, while friends saw in his marvellously varied career an evolution or development which was natural to a receptive mind with a widening experience. Eulogists of ambitious men who have been successful say that all the great are ambitious. How far ambition swayed Mr. Chamberlain's career and affected his conduct, who can tell? A large section of his fellow-countrymen believed that he was influenced by personal motives in turning against Mr. Gladstone and resisting Home Rule. So far as his public declarations went he was able to make out a plausible case that he had never been in favour of the sort of Parliament in Dublin that his chief proposed. On the other hand he had undoubtedly produced the impression, both on Radicals and on Nationalists, that he was in favour of as large an extension of Irish self-government as any other British statesman would support or tolerate. The question as to what he was likely to gain or lose individually by parting from Mr. Gladstone was difficult.

to settle. Mr. Chamberlain himself argued that it would have been in his interest to remain with Mr. Gladstone, because thereby he would have dished the Whigs ; and his friends have agreed that in such circumstances his succession to the leadership would have been assured. His adversaries reply that he was in too great a hurry, that he believed the majority of the Liberals in the country were in his favour, and that he hoped the veteran chief on being defeated would retire from political life. If, however, he was governed by the motives attributed to him, he made an amazing miscalculation.

The question of ambition arose again in connection with his retirement from Mr. Balfour's Government in 1903, and his vehement advocacy of a policy initiated by himself. Those who seek for a personal motive in his desertion of Cobdenism suspect that he was chagrined by the choice of a younger statesman—and a statesman who had done less service to the Unionist party—as successor to Lord Salisbury ; that he still aimed at the Prime Ministership, and saw that his opportunity would never come unless he seized it without much further delay. On the other hand his followers find a sufficient explanation of his fiscal propaganda in the influence of his colonial experience. They also point out that by leaving the Unionist Government he saved its head from some embarrassment, that he neglected opportunities of attacking the Administration, and that he steadily endeavoured to associate Mr. Balfour as titular leader with his new policy.

Mr. Froude, who claimed to know him well, testified that ' his aims are not selfish aims, nor is his ambition a personal one. It is part of the sincerity of his nature that he cares nothing for titles or ribands or distinctions of any kind.' No doubt it was power rather than place that he sought throughout his life, but indifference to the Prime Ministership would be unnatural in a masterful politician, and the more one studies Mr. Chamberlain's career the more one's mind is puzzled by the problem as to how far he was swayed in his action by the desire for pre-eminence. The most biting taunt that those who suspected his motives could apply to him was to say, in words quoted by a Conservative Free Trader :—

Thou, like the hindmost chariot wheel, art curst,
Still to be near, yet never to be first.

Although an inclination to intrigue was often imputed to Mr. Chamberlain by those who failed to understand him, it may be doubted if he ever endeavoured to obtain by stealthy manœuvres what others would try to secure openly. He did not conceal, his opinions or his political objects ; ' intrigue,' in his case, consisted in the management of men, the controlling of organizations, the working of the machine in the interests of his avowed aims and policy. Like Quisanté, a

politician described by a modern novelist, he had the knack of distracting attention from others and fixing it on himself. This was accounted an offence against him by those who excused their own mediocrity on the plea of discipline. Consideration for colleagues is an attractive virtue, but it cannot always be practised if it mean that the man with fierce vitality and with great driving power should regulate his movements by a common standard. Perhaps Mr. Chamberlain had himself as well as the famous Irish leader in his mind when he said to Mr. Barry O'Brien :¹ ' I have often thought Parnell was like Napoleon. He allowed nothing to stand in his way. He stopped at nothing to gain his end. If a man opposed him he flung him aside and dashed on.'

Politics were the sole business of the latter half of his crowded life. ' Vain hope,' wrote Carlyle, ' to make people happy by politics ! ' Even Mr. Morley quoted with sympathy the lines which Johnson added to *The Traveller*.

How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure !

The member for West Birmingham knew his business better than to decry his craft. He was devoted to it, and exalted it, believing that on the right settlement of politics depends to a large extent the comfort, the well-being, and even the happiness of the great mass of mortals. All statesmen make flattering appeal to the most numerous section of their fellow-citizens, and Mr. Chamberlain declared that he would not care to be in Parliament if he could not serve the interests of the working classes. But did consideration for their interests determine his conduct at the crises of his career ? Or did he decide on his policy on other considerations, and then turn to the workers for the sake of the votes which they held ? To such questions irreconcilable answers are given. It is the fate of politicians to have their motives suspected, and least of all can the wrecker of two parties escape the common lot. His qualities have exposed him to the sharpest, sternest scrutiny, and even when all the secrets of his time are revealed by the publication of the intimate letters which passed between himself and his contemporaries, critics may quarrel over a character so pungent and so provocative.

' I do not wish,' he said in 1900, ' to live a minute longer than I can have opportunity and power to serve my country.' Every statesman may, without insincerity, express the same sentiment, and there is no reason to doubt the ardour of Mr. Chamberlain's patriotism. Early in his career he was cosmopolitan in his sympathies. The interests of humanity at large inflamed his zeal and adorned his perora-

¹ *Life of C. S. Parnell.*

tions. In later years the world figured less in his rhetoric and the empire figured more. Other races were left to other reformers, and while he renounced parochialism he shared in a new and special degree the view expressed in one of his favourite poems :

That man's the best Cosmopolite
Who loves his native country best.

'Our opponents,' said the Radical Unionist, 'have forgotten nothing, repented of nothing, repudiated nothing.' '*He* has forgotten everything, repented of everything, repudiated everything,' retorted Sir William Harcourt. Mr. Chamberlain agreed with Emerson that 'a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little statesmen and philosophers and divines.' Even in early days he was, as he boasted, an inconsistent person ; and he pointed out that it was very often the duty of a statesman to alter his opinions in altered circumstances. As to the circumstances he constituted himself the judge.

Of his confessions of change the following are examples :

March 24, 1890.—'I admit I was one of those who regretted the necessity for the occupation of Egypt ; and when the occupation was forced upon us I looked forward with anxiety to an early, it might be even an immediate evacuation . . . but I have changed my mind.'

January 15, 1891.—'We (Conservatives and Liberal Unionists) have both of us to put a good many of our prejudices and our opinions in our pockets.'

July 10, 1891.—'All that has happened since 1885 has shaken my confidence in the particular solution of the Irish Question, which I was then prepared heartily to support.'

November 18, 1891.—'I am very willing to confess that the word "Ransom" was not very well chosen to express my own meaning.'

1893 (An Irish Board of Control).—Admits he had changed the opinion he held in 1885 as to the possibility of entrusting even these limited powers to the present representatives of the majority in Ireland.

April 30, 1895.—'A speech of mine has been quoted which, like all those speeches, was delivered a very considerable time ago, as to which I will say that since then no doubt some of my opinions have been modified and some of them remain unchanged.'

May 1, 1896.—'In 1870 I was in favour of the extinction of the Voluntary Schools, but I have changed my mind.'

April 24, 1899 (Old Age Pensions).—'I have made various proposals and suggested various schemes, and some of the proposals which I have made in the first instance, I have myself subsequently rejected as being inadequate and impracticable.'

September 23, 1900.—'I was in the Government which gave back the independence of the Transvaal after Majuba. It was a disastrous mistake.'

October 21, 1903 (Fair Trade and Preference).—'I admit that I have changed my opinion.'

Plutarch reports that Demades, to excuse the inconsistency of his public character, used to say, 'I may have asserted things contrary to my former sentiments, but not anything contrary to the true interest of the commonwealth.' In like manner the whole matter of inconsistency was summed up by Mr. Chamberlain on May 5, 1905. 'I know,' he remarked to his followers in Birmingham, 'that there are some peo-

ple who say that in the course of our long experience you and I have been inconsistent or have changed our opinions. I do not know that it matters whether we have or have not ; the main point is we should always be right.' His view was made intelligible by the fact that he ignored the past. He was not troubled by ghosts. 'I am,' as he confessed, 'not generally inclined to indulge much in political retrospect. I am more ready to say : Let the dead past bury its dead. Our business is with the present and with the future.' Perhaps he would have done himself no injustice if he had merely said 'our business is with the present.' On his changing his view of a question while he was a member of Mr. Gladstone's Government a Birmingham gentleman asked him, 'But how about your future if you change about like this?' 'The future!' he replied. 'In politics a fortnight's future is quite enough for me.' On another occasion he remarked to a friend that 'the man who thinks of the past is a fool ; the man who thinks of the future is a visionary ; I think only of the present twenty-four hours.'

Mr. Chamberlain possessed an unusually large combination of qualities which contribute to the success of the statesman in a self-governing country. He had the inborn instinct for politics ; he was the man of business with the art of administration ; he was endowed with the gift of speech both for the platform and for Parliament. In the Cabinet his quickness and resource fitted him equally for criticism and for compromise. Mr. Gladstone noted that he was 'a good man to talk to, not only from his force and clearness, but because he speaks with reflection, does not misapprehend or (I think) suspect or make unnecessary difficulties, or endeavour to maintain pedantically the uniformity and consistency of his argument throughout.' These were qualities which gave him value in Council.

As an administrator he surpassed the average statesman who learns business in a country house. At the Board of Trade he was, in certain matters, and perhaps not least in fiscal affairs, under the influence of the permanent officials, but he initiated many reforms, and carried some of them. The Colonial Office found in him a strong chief. He did not interfere unnecessarily in small questions, but he mastered great affairs, and gave firm decisions. Frequently during the Boer War he devoted fourteen hours a day to the public service, going early to his Department, thence to the House of Commons in the afternoon, and with an interval for dinner working till late at night. Civil servants are pleased to have a political chief who is capable and powerful, not because they want to be managed but because they want to have their business carried through the Cabinet and Parliament. Mr. Chamberlain made his Department the most prominent in the State, and got the best work possible out of its staff. The Kaffirs were right

when they described him as 'the man who puts things straight.' He showed strength even in refraining from jobs. The Secretary of State for the Colonies, not least among the Ministers, is troubled by applications from persons who consider they have a claim on the party in power for appointments for themselves or their relatives. Such applications were wrongly addressed to a chief who required efficiency. It was reported that he handed them over to be dealt with by the office in the ordinary routine.

What has been said by Lord Rosebery of Pitt's devotion to the House of Commons may be said of Mr. Chamberlain's: 'The objects and amusements that other men seek in a thousand ways were for him all concentrated there. It was his mistress, his stud, his dice-box, his game-preserve; it was his ambition, his library, his creed.' It was at Westminster that Mr. Chamberlain struggled hardest and gained his highest reputation; there he aroused the fiercest animosities and won the most notable victories. He understood the House of Commons. He knew its habits, its moods, its prejudices, its virtues; he knew how to humour it, he often dared to defy it. He never despised it. At the end of twenty-eight years service, he declared: 'During all that time my respect for its authority, my confidence in its judgment, my desire for its good opinion, has never wavered.' Nor did any section, however much it might dislike him, ever despise so skilful and zealous a member. From the month that he took his seat till the day of his last speech he was an individual force, not always calculable, never negligible.

The most passionate hours of the House of Commons for a quarter of a century were, as a rule, those when he was dominating the scene. Cool as a cucumber himself, he excited turmoil in others. The upright figure, the aggressive face, the mocking lips, the keen challenging eyes, the defiant nose, the eyeglass calmly placed in position, the clear-cut phrases, the many toned voice, were conspicuous in numberless debates when passion ran high at St. Stephen's. A man, like Jeremiah, of strife and contention, he more frequently than most members used the words of warfare.

Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high
He sought the storms; but for a calm unfit,
Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.

Even in his most conciliatory mood—to adopt Sir William Harcourt's metaphor—he 'mixed with his oil a little vinegar, so as to make the salad of his speeches agreeable to the palate.' Mr. Gladstone remarked in old age:¹ 'I always made it a rule in the House of Commons to allow nobody to suppose that I did not like him, and to say as little as I could to prevent anybody from liking me.' Consider-

¹ *Life of Gladstone*, by John Morley.

ing the intense friction and contention of public life, it was, he thought, saving of wear and tear that as many as possible, even among opponents, should think well of one. On the other hand, Mr. Chamberlain showed his dislikes. He loved fighting, and feared no man's hate. 'When I am struck I try to strike back again.' 'I have often been hard hit with reference to my public actions, and I have never complained, but I have endeavoured to give as good as I get.' His view of political ethics was expressed in a letter to Lord Randolph Churchill. Lord Randolph after resignation gave an assurance that Lord Salisbury need not fear the slightest opposition from him, whereupon Mr. Chamberlain wrote: 'When a man says that in no case will he return a blow he is very likely to be cuffed.'¹ And when the attack of his ally fell on himself he said: 'You know that I am the mildest of men, but I have a strong inclination to hit at those who strike me, and my experience teaches me that no private friendship can long resist the effect of public contest.'

Sometimes he rubbed the sore and indulged in taunts which left feelings of resentment. For years the Nationalists bore a grudge against him for describing them as 'a kept party.' One of his most scathing gibes was flung at an Irish member who had made some comments on the lady whose name was associated with Mr. Parnell's in the law courts. While these comments were fresh in the public memory he tried to deprive Mr. Chamberlain of the right to resume a debate. 'I have noticed,' the latter calmly remarked, 'that whenever it is desirable to exhibit personal discourtesy towards any man—or any woman—the honourable and learned gentleman always presents himself to accomplish it.' The allusion to 'any woman' was an unexpected and merciless thrust. Mr. Chamberlain's humour, too, left a blister. It was intended not to amuse but to ridicule; the laughter it excited was always at the expense of somebody, and frequently the laughter was cruel.

A new style of debate was popularised by the member for Birmingham. The old school of oratory, with its learning and its pomp, was decaying when he entered the House, the fresh type of Parliamentarian introduced by the extension of the franchise requiring a simpler sort of speech. This was characterised by directness, and in Mr. Chamberlain's case by audacity. For the Grandisonian manner he substituted incisiveness. Bagehot has said that intelligibility was the first, second and third thing in Palmerston. 'No one resembled less than Lord Palmerston the fancied portrait of an ideal statesman laying down in his closet plans to be worked out twenty years hence. He was a statesman for the moment. Whatever was not wanted now, whatever was not practicable now, whatever would not take now,

¹ *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, by W. S. Churchill.

he drove quite out of his mind.' This might have been written of Mr. Chamberlain; and to his intelligibility and to his concentration on what would 'take,' he partly owed his Parliamentary success. His mind did not wander in speculation; it was intensely practical, and he expressed it with the vigour and plainness of the market place.

As a platform speaker Mr. Chamberlain has had few rivals in the political domain. He knew the arguments which impress the mass of men, and he knew how to present them in a popular form. At the height of his power at least, he was never dull. His personality was in itself an attraction. His alert, sharp face combined with a vibrating voice and an incisive style to arrest attention and to impress a public meeting. Few politicians are good speakers. They rush to the platform and tumble out a medley of matter. There is no polish in their phrases, and very little arrangement in their arguments. The reputation of many of our front bench Parliamentarians might be ruined if a newspaper were to publish a full report of their speeches, giving each clumsy sentence as it is formed by pretentious lips. Mr. Chamberlain had the gift of expression. He knew what he meant to say, and he said what he meant. Moreover, he spoke always with the air of conviction. What he stated on any occasion might be inconsistent with what he had said formerly, but when he uttered it the listener felt that it was his firm and unqualified belief.

A French writer has remarked that true eloquence consists in saying all that is proper, and nothing more. The latter part of this rule was not observed in some of Mr. Chamberlain's fiscal speeches. During the greater part of his career, however, he was distinguished, as compared with other politicians, by his brevity. Neither Lord Salisbury nor Mr. Asquith was ever diffuse, and the brilliant speaker who was trained in Birmingham was also among the least of offenders. As Mr. Asquith observed, he rarely digressed and he never lost his way. 'I am grateful to providence,' he said with sly allusion to a friend and leader, 'that I am not myself a metaphysician.' He meant he was not as other men, whose views were vague and confused, and ill to understand. The power of clearly defining what we know and think might, in his opinion, be learned like any other branch of knowledge. Mr. Chamberlain acquired the power by perseverance and practice. Frequently in debate he had only brief notes, but with his clear, cool, narrow mind, with his direct intellect and his literary instinct, he framed his sentences in so orderly a manner that they might have been reproduced without sub-editing. His addresses in the early 'eighties were specially fine in form. They had a style, due probably to an inspiring teacher, such as Burke, which his later utterances lacked.

Probably no man's words, not even Mr. Gladstone's, have occupied

so many columns in the newspapers as Mr. Chamberlain's. For thirty years he had the ear of the country, and for a quarter of a century many newspapers published his speeches *verbatim*. Mr. Frederic Harrison has pointed out that hardly a single adequate specimen of Chatham's oratory has been fully reported. Specimens of Mr. Chamberlain's oratory would fill many volumes, but effective as any man's speeches may be at the time of delivery their fame will perish, like the fame of a second-rate actor, unless they are supported by character and deeds. And who will say that the modern imperialist, with volumes of spoken words for his pedestal, will stand as high as Chatham with 'hardly a single adequate specimen' of his oratory reported?

The speeches by Mr. Chamberlain which may live longest are those that he delivered in advocacy of the unauthorised programme. They are the speeches which his later admirers would most willingly forget, but the printed word remains as a guide to a new generation of Radicals, and as an illustration of the vanity of human forecasts. Their sincerity is as real as their passion; and the least favourable critic of their policy feels that the orator was then, if ever, inspired by conviction. His power over an audience was unimpaired by years of change, and after Mr. Gladstone's death he was unequalled on the platform except by Lord Rosebery. As Achille Viallate, in his biography (1899) states, Mr. Chamberlain then stood in the front rank as a political orator, and knew, as nobody else knew, how to excite enthusiasm, how to dominate and carry away an audience. In his last active years his mastery was not so steadily maintained, but he continued to attract the attention and excite the wonder of the country by flashes of his old force. Matthew Arnold has said of Macaulay that he had his own heightened and telling way of putting things, 'and we must make allowance for it.' Mr. Chamberlain's heightened and telling way of putting things assisted him to capture popular audiences.

Literary quotations abounded in his speeches, although they may not have indicated a deep knowledge of literature. The practice of quotation varies from generation to generation. Charles Fox used to say, 'No Greek; as much Latin as you like; and never French under any circumstances.' Later, the Duke of Wellington's advice to a member was, 'Say what you have to say, don't quote Latin; and sit down.' Disraeli remarked that they often had Latin quotations in his day, but 'never from a member with a new constituency,' and when Greek was quoted 'the House was quite alarmed.' Greek went first. Since Mr. Gladstone's death it has scarcely ever been quoted in Parliament. Latin, too, has almost gone. Mr. Chamberlain, in his first important speech in the House, ventured on *jaculis descendus Averno*, but even tags and phrases found in popular dictionaries have been discouraged by the protests of Labour members. French has

come in although everybody laughs at everybody else's pronunciation. 'No English poet,' said Fox, 'unless he has completed his century!' Sir William Harcourt tried to observe this rule because his inclination ran that way. Most members, however, are more modern. Recent prose, even, has been quoted, Lord Hugh Cecil for instance introducing Mr. H. G. Wells into debate and Mr. T. P. O'Connor giving an extract from the book of the week. In *Byways in the Classics* Mr. Hugh E. P. Platt predicts that quotations in the House of Commons will be confined in the future to the Bible and Shakespeare; and the *Athenæum*, in a review, adds Dickens as a third source. Some of the most telling quotations given in Parliament are from Scripture, and not the least effective have come from men who make no claim to be religious. Hansard, however, is the book to which reference is made most frequently. It is safe for either party to quote Peel, and it is useful for a Tory to quote Gladstone.

Among modern writers Mr. Chamberlain's range was wide. His favourite sources of quotation included *Pickwick* and the *Biglow Papers*; he acquired a habit of citing vaguely 'the American poet' (usually Longfellow), and in his later years he adorned his perorations with 'what the colonial poet says.' He made frequent use of *Alice in Wonderland* which is the non-political book most often mentioned in the House of Commons. Sometimes the form of his literary allusions was amateurish. In 1885 he referred to 'the late Mr. Carlyle'; in 1893 he quoted 'a work called *Romola*—I think by George Eliot'. On another occasion he attributed to Mrs. Malaprop, Dogberry's 'comparisons are odorous'; perhaps he was thinking of her remark; 'No caparisons, Miss, if you please; caparisons don't suit a young lady.' 'Only Pretty Fanny's way' is a gibe much employed in Parliament, and nobody repeated Thomas Parnell's words with more expressiveness than Mr. Chamberlain. He went also to *Adam Bede* for Mrs. Poyser's sharp sayings. Like many other members he cited *Oliver Twist* 'asking for more,' and he taunted opponents, from Mr. Gladstone downwards, on having 'as little to tell as Canning's needy knifegrinder.' His favourite Shakespearian quotation was: 'Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety.' He had a partiality also for—

Vex not his ghost:
Oh, let him pass: he hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

A familiar verse from Bayly, with the pronouns altered, he put into the mouth of Liberals, in reference to Home Rule:—

Oh no ! we never mention it ;
 Its name is never heard.
 Our lips are now forbid to speak
 That once familiar word.

It is a mistake to suppose, as unkind critics have suggested, that Mr. Chamberlain relied for his literary ornaments on books of familiar quotations. An intimate Radical friend from whom he parted in 1886 asserted that he was in no sense a well-read or well-informed man outside such affairs as circumstances compelled him to master. He read, however, a great deal in a desultory manner. There is evidence in some of his early articles and speeches of the influence of Mr. Morley's favourite authors ; so that he had good direction. At the outset of his career he quoted Bacon, referring to him as the greatest member who ever sat in the House of Lords. To the Town Council of Birmingham, in 1874, he introduced Gulliver. In the *Fortnightly* at the same period he applied two lines from Milton to Mr. Goschen, thus :—

In arms not worn, in foresight much advanced,
 To wage, by force or guile, eternal war.

Not foreseeing that he would live to be a pessimist, he was accustomed to repeat in his most sarcastic tone :—

Now the world is a dreffle mean place, for our sins,
 Where ther' ollus is critters about with long pins,
 A-prickin' the globes we've blowed up with sech care,
 An' provin' there's nothin' inside but bad air.

One of his happiest efforts was, in 1881, his application to gentle Sir Stafford Northcote of the description given of Madame Blaize :—

She strove the neighbourhood to please,
 With manners wondrous winning ;
 And never followed wicked ways—
 Unless when she was sinning.

He was also happy in 1882, when apropos of Lord Randolph Churchill's style of criticism, he recalled the directions given in *The Compleat Angler* for baiting a hook with a live frog. He summarised Izaak Walton's directions by saying ' put your hook in his mouth, and out of his gills, and tie his leg to the wire with a fine thread ; and in so doing use him as though you loved him.' This, by the way, was a good description of his own tender method of dealing with opponents. An opponent of whom he often made fun sent him to the pages of Dickens. Sir Richard Cross's declaration, in 1883, that at last the time had come for vigorous action by the Conservatives, reminded him of ' the amusing incident in the *Pickwick Papers*, when Mr. Weller attempted to rescue his master from the constables, and when Mr. Snodgrass, in a truly Christian spirit, and in order that he might take

no one unawares, announced in a very loud tone that he was going to begin, whereupon he was immediately secured without making the slightest resistance.' He also declared that Sir Richard asked questions after the fashion of Sergeant Buzfuz, as though he expected to get his witness committed for contempt. During the Scottish tour in 1885, Mr. Chamberlain looked up Burns, and from a less known poet he quoted with electrical effect the pathetic lines of which there are various renderings, beginning :—

From the dim shieling on the misty island
Mountains divide us and a world of seas.

Preaching the gospel of humanity, he replied to those who rebuked him for impetuosity in the fine words of Leonato :—

It is all men's office to speak patience
To those that wring under the load of sorrow ;
But no man's virtue, nor sufficiency,
To be so moral, when he shall endure
The like himself.

Mr. Chamberlain's allusions ranged from the optimism of *Candide* (which he attributed to Mr. Goschen) to the remedies of Dr. Sangrado ; he likened Sir William Harcourt to Falstaff, Dugald Dalgetty and Mr. Turveydrop ; as we have seen, he linked Mr. Morley with Mr. Pecksniff and Sir George Trevelyan with Joseph Surface ; he compared more than one statesman to Mark Tapley, and jeered at Mr. Gibson (afterwards Lord Ashbourne) for playing the part of Sancho Panza to Lord Salisbury. His quotations roamed from *Faust* to comic opera. He quoted Coleridge and Moore and Prior ; he was fond of Cowper and Pope ; he gave a pungent extract from Walter Savage Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* ; and several times he made effective use of Charles Churchill, the literary bravo noted for scurrilous satire. He mocked his opponents, from peers to Radicals, with the couplet :—

We kicked them downstairs with such a sweet grace
That they thought we were handing them up.

For the most characteristic quotation of his late Imperial days he went to Byron :—

A thousand years scarce serve to form a State,
An hour may lay it in the dust.

Few of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches on tariff reform were complete without poetry. Frequently he quoted from authors whom he did not name. 'And such poetry !' exclaimed Mr. Churchill, as if the exclamation were sufficient in its scorn. Very rarely did he cite any lines quite exactly. In some cases the variation might have been a fault of memory, but occasionally as has been said of Scott with respect

to his Journal, 'it would seem that he deliberately made free with the words of his author, to adapt them more pertinently to his own mood or the impulse of the moment.'

Scarcely any enduring phrases sprang from Mr. Chamberlain. Seldom, indeed, does a politician produce a literary pearl, and modern catch-words, as a rule, lack originality. 'Peace with honour,' a phrase used by a statesman who was a master of language, was traced to Pitt, Burke, Cromwell, to George Wither's *Vox Pacifica*, to Shakespeare and to Sir Robert Cecil in 1598; Disraeli's 'plundering and blundering' was copied from Bolingbroke; 'bag and baggage,' familiarised by Mr. Gladstone, had been put into Touchstone's mouth by Shakespeare, and used in *The Holy War* by Bunyan; 'by Jingo,' the refrain of a militant music-hall ditty, which led Sir Wilfrid Lawson in January, 1878 to call the noisy patriots 'Jingoes,' was an expression employed by certain fine ladies in the time of *The Vicar of Wakefield*; 'to kill Home Rule with kindness' was an adaptation by an Irish Chief Secretary from Petruchio's 'way to kill a wife with kindness'; and Mr. Morley's 'end it or mend it' was found in *The Monastery*, *Don Juan* and the letters of Erasmus. Among the picturesque metaphors of recent years were Mr. Asquith's 'ploughing the sand' and Lord Rosebery's 'clean slate' and 'lonely furrow,' while Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman gave a word to controversy by satirising a phase of Irish agitation as 'Ulsteria.' Mr. Chamberlain's 'filling the cup' described the accumulation of Radical grievances against the House of Lords long after he ceased to have any; he took 'they toil not, neither do they spin' from the sublimest sermon; his 'what I have said, I have said,' the motto of a baronet, was used by Thomas Paine; and although he gave currency to 'little Englander' it was first suggested in 1884 by the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

A resemblance to Pitt was detected in Mr. Chamberlain. *Punch* depicted him gazing at a portrait of that strong statesman and saying, 'Yes; no doubt we are very much alike. He wanted only the eye-glass.' Mr. Thomas Hardy, alluding to 'the cleanly-cut, exquisitely pursed-up mouth of William Pitt' as represented in the bust by Nollekens, says it is a mouth which is in itself a young man's fortune, if properly exercised. It brought fortune to the member for West Birmingham with its keenness, force and decision, with its tight snap, and its curl of irony and scorn. Mr. Chamberlain's eyes were difficult to fathom; they were cold and yet challenging, as if always ready for combat. The general expression of his features in conversation indicated a vigilant composure, with a slight disdain. Caricaturists in his late years gave him a fox-like aspect with what Mr. George Meredith called an adventurous nose. His face, like Macbeth's, was ever as a book where men might read strange matters, a

face of restless thoughts and deep designs. His head was commonly represented as small, but seen sideways it surprised one by its length. The secret of youth was possessed by this wonderful man for an amazing period. When nearly sixty he seemed at a distance to be only about thirty. The youthful illusion was aided by the clean-shaven face, the slight whisker of early manhood having disappeared in middle age, and by the smoothly-brushed, dark hair, as well as by the alacrity of the figure. In his last Parliamentary decade the stoop of the shoulders, the lines on the forehead, the streaks of grey in the hair, betrayed the approach of the winter of life, but the features maintained the expression of sharp intelligence and indomitable will. So long as his form was erect Mr. Chamberlain looked above the middle height. He always dressed with obvious care, and the orchid in the button-hole added to the conspicuous smartness of his appearance.

One who was well acquainted with most of his contemporaries has said that he knew no man with so strong a will as Mr. Chamberlain, except Mr. Gladstone. Another observer with good opportunities of judging him described him as a creature of impulse, and although the description sounded sarcastic in many ears, Mr. Labouchere testified that 'he adopted a course without much consideration.' However this might be, when he took a decision he carried it out with a concentration and energy that moved mountains. He was the most strenuous politician of his time; engrossed in the business of the kingdom and the empire, he was determined to have it transacted as much as possible in his own way. Egotism was naturally as conspicuous in Mr. Chamberlain as in other able and ambitious men. 'I' figured in his official utterances, where the average minister would have spoken of 'the Government.' When he complained that he was introduced into all the orations of his opponents, like King Charles's head into Mr. Dick's petition, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman truly retorted that he was the occupier of that place in his own speeches.

XLV

THE FINAL YEARS

'The history of a life is the history of a body no less than that of a soul.'—
John Morley (*Rousseau*).

WITH dramatic exactness Mr. Chamberlain's active career terminated with his three score years and ten. His birthday was celebrated with high honours, and then came sudden silence, followed by long seclusion.

'Upon the rack of this tough world'

his life was stretched out a good deal longer, but in such a manner that the hearts of opponents were softened. It was, for him, a sort of death in life.

The terrific overthrow of the Unionists at the general election in January, 1906, failed to subdue Mr. Chamberlain's spirit. He had foreseen defeat, and although now confronted by an immense force of exulting enemies, he looked forward bravely and briskly to the time when, free from the clogging unpopularity of the Balfour Administration, his own policy would be presented at the polls. Now that the Unionists were out of office he hoped to draw them as an organized army into the fiscal campaign. Taking his place on the front Opposition bench among the members of the late Cabinet and leading the party with conspicuous skill while Mr. Balfour was in search of a seat, he rallied the dejected men and with high words 'raised their fainting courage and dispell'd their fears.' His firm intention to sweep aside restraints and pursue his policy at all risks was made manifest in a remarkable letter which he addressed to Lord Ridley, an enthusiastic officer of the Tariff Reform League, on February 6. 'From the beginning,' he wrote, 'I have made it absolutely clear that in no circumstances would I be a candidate for the leadership of the Unionist party—first, because after having worked in the closest friendship with Mr. Balfour for twenty years I will not place myself in competition with him now; and secondly, because I entirely agree with those who say that the leader of a party, seven-tenths of which are Conservatives, should be himself a Conservative.' These words would have been meaningless if the idea of leadership which he disavowed had

not been put forward in some Unionist quarters. It was notoriously favoured by the Tariff Reform 'whole-hoggers.' Mr. Chamberlain declared, however, that there was no question of repudiating the leadership of Mr. Balfour or of putting undue pressure upon him to abandon his opinions or his friends. 'On the other hand,' he added in a tone of menace, 'Tariff Reformers sincerely believe in their principles, and cannot be expected to put them aside to suit the exigencies of party wire-pullers.'

The ominous character of this warning was recognized by all politicians, and in spite of Mr. Chamberlain's protest, Liberals at least believed that he would soon be compelled to take the post for which he was not a candidate. Those who were in his confidence say that he contemplated the issue of a manifesto with a view to the formation of a separate party upon a tariff reform and social reform basis. An exchange of notes, however, passed between himself and Mr. Balfour, with the result that a formula, devised by Mr. Austen Chamberlain, was agreed upon and placed in writing. 'I hold,' Mr. Balfour certified, 'that fiscal reform is, and must remain, the first constructive work of the Unionist party.' Accepting this declaration, Mr. Chamberlain placed his services at the defeated leader's disposal, and the allied statesmen sat again side by side when Mr. Balfour was elected by the City of London.

A slight attack of influenza troubled Mr. Chamberlain at the beginning of 1906, and in spring he suffered from his old enemy, gout. His manner became strangely restless. Both in and out of Parliament, however, he took a bold part in controversy. When Mr. Asquith, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, began to prepare the way for old age pensions, their early advocate assumed a critical attitude. Mr. Chamberlain repeated emphatically that never in the whole course of his political life had he promised pensions; and he asserted that all he had done was to express his sense of the necessity of enabling the industrious working people to make a better provision for old age and to put before them two practical schemes. 'A universal old age pension,' he held, 'is impracticable from the point of view of its expense, and is immoral and undesirable from the point of view of its influence upon thrift and industry.' This was almost his final contribution to the discussion of a subject which he more than any other statesman had forced on the attention of the country.

A still more pathetic interest clings to the speeches which he delivered on the education question when it was dealt with by the bill of the Liberal Government. It was on this theme that he addressed the House of Commons for the first time in 1876, and on this theme, in 1906, he addressed it for the last time. Although regarded by Liberals as a renegade on account of his hostility to the plan which

the Lords rejected, he claimed a certain consistency in principle. 'I hold as I have always done,' he wrote on April 25, 'that there are only two just ways of settling this question. One is that the State should confine itself to secular instruction, giving equal facilities to all denominations to provide the religious education which may be desired by the parents for their children. The other is that the State should provide religious education for all, according to the wishes that may be expressed by the parents of the children. Of these two alternatives I myself greatly prefer the first, and believe that ultimately it is in this direction that a final settlement must be looked for.' In the spirit of this letter Mr. Chamberlain took part, on May 9, in the second reading debate on Mr. Birrell's bill embodying the principles of public control of public money and abolition of tests for teachers. Recalling his maiden speech, delivered thirty years previously, he said it was very curious to look back and see that the position remained exactly the same, and that we had not proceeded one step towards a final settlement. Once more he expressed the opinion that an entire separation between the work of the State and the work of the individual or denomination offered the only foundation on which to establish a fair and impartial system. When he spoke of 'what we desire,' Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman archly inquired who were 'we,' and ever ready with a reply he said 'we' meant those who agreed with 'me.' In this case 'we' included few of the Conservatives.

Mr. Chamberlain spoke for the last time in the House of Commons on June 27. His first speech (in 1876) was in committee on Lord Sandon's Education Bill; his final words were in committee on Mr. Birrell's. It is encouraging, incidentally, to note that at the close of his career in Parliament he testified that there was one thing on which they might always appeal to the democracy of this country, and that was on the eternal principle of common justice. To the last, as he thus showed, his faith in his fellow-countrymen was maintained. His own self-confidence also was fully preserved. As noted in the chapter on his Personal Life, Dr. Clifford had remarked that they all knew what 'Joey wanted.' Mr. Chamberlain retorted disdainfully that he was not certain his critic did know all he wanted. Unfortunately the sands of his opportunities of telling what he wanted were almost run out. Speaking a second time the same day he advocated universal facilities for parents, who dissented from the teaching in any given school, to secure for their children the kind of religious education which they desired. These were his closing words in Parliamentary debate. A week later, July 4, on an amendment to the Education Bill, he gave his last vote.

The celebrations of his seventieth birthday, which took place at Birmingham on Saturday and Monday, July 7 and 9, were characterized

by a personal devotion and an enthusiasm which deeply moved him. At a civic luncheon on the 7th he displayed remarkable sensibility ; ' tears stood in his eyes, and his voice quavered ' while he told his fellow-townsmen that he had found in their affection an overwhelming reward for a strenuous life of work and contest. Along with the members of his family and attended by a procession of eighty motor-cars, he visited six public parks where the people were entertained, making a three hours' journey over a route of seventeen miles through decorated streets, lined by cheering citizens. On the second day of the celebrations delegates from all parts of the country presented addresses of congratulation, and numerous telegrams were received from across the seas. There was a political demonstration in Bingley Hall, the scene of many of his triumphs, at which the hero was greeted with extraordinary fervour, and it was followed by a torchlight procession, which attended Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain to their gates. All this, while very gratifying, was excessively fatiguing.

Suddenly a veil dropped over the life of the man who had been so conspicuous for over thirty years. In the middle of July the country learned that on the 13th, at his London residence, he had been seized by illness. His absence from the wedding of his son, Austen, eight days later, was the first indication of its gravity. Much reserve was maintained as to the character of the ailment. It was described by friends as an attack of gout, and they ridiculed rumours about a paralytic stroke. When the invalid returned to Birmingham in the middle of September the world was informed that he had to be conveyed from the train to his carriage in a chair, and it was ominously explained about the same time that his fingers were so cramped that he could not write with comfort.

For six months after going home to Highbury Mr. Chamberlain was seen by scarcely any one except his family and attendants. He spent several hours daily in his garden and greenhouses, and by the end of the year he was ' permitted to read.' In March, 1907, he travelled to London with as little publicity as possible, a compartment in the train being reserved for him under an assumed name, and after a rest he proceeded to St. Raphael, near Cannes. A fellow-passenger on the Channel boat said he was so changed that he was not generally recognized. In June he came back to England, and several times during summer he passed between London and Birmingham. On railway platforms he walked slowly, leaning upon a stick and supported by a companion at his side. He was unable to use his right hand ; his right leg also was affected ; and his appearance was greatly altered by the spectacles which he now wore instead of the familiar monocle. For a long time yet Mr. Chamberlain could not receive his friends, but by the close of 1907 he was able to attend to

letters and the world gladly heard then that there was a possibility of his health being restored. 'I hope,' he wrote, 'it may not be long before I take my place again in the front rank of the fight for Unionism and the policy for which it now stands,' and in the following February (1908) he caused another letter to be written in a similar strain. 'I am getting better but am still far from having recovered my ancient strength. I hope, however, that this is only a question of time and patience.'

Subsequent years passed like 1907. For several months in the spring and summer of 1908 the intrepid invalid, whose helpless condition excited universal sympathy, was abroad, trying a cure at Aix-les-Bains after his visit to Cannes, and going also to Ouchy. He acknowledged the salutations of people who met him, while travelling, by raising his left hand. The autumn was spent at Highbury, where he took drives and continued to enjoy the hours in his garden, and he was in London for several weeks in December. His new life fell into a routine. He spent the early months of successive years at Cannes and the remainder of the time at his home at Birmingham with the exception of occasional visits to Prince's Gardens. At Cannes he occupied the Ville Victoria, its sunny garden, stocked with sub-tropical trees and plants, sloping down to La Napoule Bay, and commanding a magnificent view.

In his feebleness and seclusion, as his family reported, Mr. Chamberlain watched political events with undiminished interest. To the growth of the new fiscal doctrines his encouragement was essential; without it they might have quickly drooped and faded. Seldom has the life of a statesman been so indispensable to followers. Many letters and telegrams expressing his wishes and views were drawn from Mr. Chamberlain by Tariff Reform candidates and societies, and his hold on the popular imagination was maintained by the idea of the strong man stricken in body but valorous in mind. In May, 1908, by a letter written in his name he expressed the conviction that Tariff Reform was now being adopted by the people. 'They see,' he said, 'that it is only in this way that one can keep our position against our foreign competitors and they will not allow what our forefathers won for us to be filched from us by modern indifference.' A touch of the old adroit hand was given in a message read at a luncheon at which Mr. Balfour was entertained, in March, 1909, by the Executive of the Tariff Reform League. The founder of the League regretted that he could not attend to 'welcome our leader on the occasion of his doing honour to an Association that was brought into being to advance the first constructive policy of the party which he leads.' No doubt the 'leader' remembered that the Association was formed to promote a policy initiated not by himself but by his colleague!

Great transactions were carried out after Mr. Chamberlain's voice and presence were withdrawn from Parliament by the Ministry of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and his successor, Mr. Asquith. Responsible government was conceded to the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, which subsequently formed part of the South African Union, old age pensions were provided for the poor at home, and Mr. Lloyd George's 1909 budget with its land and liquor taxes and its increased burdens on the very rich led to the opening of a new chapter of the constitutional struggle. The House of Lords, which had already defied the huge majority in the representative chamber by rejecting several of the ministerial measures, was encouraged by Mr. Chamberlain to throw out the Finance Bill embodying the budget. At a meeting at Birmingham in September, 1909, when Mr. Balfour, who was a guest at Highbury, bore witness to the continued high courage, clear intellect and assured judgment of his host, a letter was 'amid tense silence' produced from the invalid expressing the hope that the Peers would see their way to force a general election. By this stroke the fate of the notorious budget in its first Parliament was sealed, for to many Unionists—as one of the ablest of them said—Mr. Chamberlain's voice still represented the guiding note. 'The master hand,' Mr. F. E. Smith testified, 'was still there, the old skill, the old courage were still undimmed; the voice, though hushed for the moment in our public controversies, was ever ready in brave, and wise counsel.'

Mr. Chamberlain proceeded to London at the end of October and remained there till the Peers, who were advised by Lord Milner to damn the consequences, referred the Finance Bill to the country. Their action was defended in a fearless, unflinching manner by their old assailant, who now wrote that their only offence was that of giving the nation a chance to speak for itself. A few friends saw Mr. Chamberlain during the crisis, and one of them, the son of his early political comrade, Admiral Maxse, said that those who had been privileged to discuss public affairs with him were more than ever impressed by his keenness, foresight, wisdom, valour and confidence. Recalling a fine tribute paid to another famous British statesman, Mr. Maxse reported that every combatant left his presence a better and a braver man. His absence from the field, however, was a misfortune for the Unionists during the general election of January, 1910. They could truly say, as the Carthaginians wrote over the grave of Hannibal: 'We vehemently desired him in the day of battle.' The bold challenge of the Peers did not result in triumph. Although a large number of the Liberals fell, the Unionists were left in a minority.

A most moving spectacle was witnessed by the House of Commons on February 16, 1910, when the statesman who had personified vigour

and force came, after an absence of three-and-a-half years, to take the oath in the new Parliament.

'Doth any here know me? This is not Lear :
Doth Lear walk thus? speak thus?
Where are his eyes?'

At the close of an afternoon devoted to the swearing in of members, when the House was almost empty, an old stricken man came slowly from behind the Speaker's chair, leaning on a stick in his left hand and putting his right foot stiffly down on the heel, Mr. Austen Chamberlain supporting him on the right side and the Liberal Unionist Whip ready to aid him at his other elbow. His right arm was held closely to his breast; his face was fireless, and spectacles gave to a familiar figure a strange, almost disguising aspect. Onlookers felt a shock of sorrow when in the broken, helpless man they recognized one by whom Parliament had been inspired and mastered. On his being assisted to a convenient place on the Treasury Bench, not then occupied by any of the ministers, a copy of the oath was held before him and he recited its terms as they were read out, phrase by phrase, by his son, his voice being quite audible but his articulation indistinct. Mr. Austen signed the roll on his behalf, the invalid confirming the signature by formally touching the pen. 'Mr. Chamberlain, West Birmingham, sir,' announced the Clerk of the House, with a tone of emotion in his voice as he presented, according to custom, the newly sworn in member to the Speaker; and Mr. Lowther, leaning from his chair, grasped the left hand which was offered, while he whispered, 'How do you do? Glad to see you again.' Having taken the oath, Mr. Chamberlain could be 'paired' in divisions with an absentee on the other side. His 'pair' was his only part in the proceedings of the short Parliament elected in January, 1910.

Visits from the Palace were paid to him. King Edward called at Prince's Gardens in the summer of 1909 and spent a considerable time with Mr. Chamberlain. This was the end of the association which began at Birmingham in 1874 when the Radical mayor's reception of the Prince of Wales excited so much curiosity. On his return from his annual visit to Cannes in 1910 he received from King George the same honour as had been paid to him by King Edward. The new Sovereign, a few weeks after succeeding to the throne, took tea with Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain and remained in conversation with them for an hour. For the first time since his illness the invalid spent his birthday this year in London. Personal friends called at his residence and ninety Tariff Reformers belonging to the two Houses of Parliament celebrated the occasion by dining together at Prince's Restaurant.

The year 1910 was notable for the development of the constitutional struggle. Resolutions to curtail the veto of the Lords were passed by the House of Commons, and a conference between leading members of the two great parties having failed to secure agreement, the Government appealed to the country on the subject in December, and although Mr. Balfour endeavoured to conciliate the Unionist Free Fooders by agreeing to a special Referendum on Tariff Reform, Mr. Asquith was maintained in office and enabled to carry out his plans by a combination of Liberal, Nationalist, and Labour members.

Once more, on February 2, 1911, Mr. Chamberlain visited the House of Commons, and took the oath. This he did in the same manner and with the same assistance as in the previous Parliament. In some respects he seemed a little more like his former self. His face as he surveyed the scene had the old keen glance, and there was a note of the old vibrating tone in his voice, although the words came forth in jerks. An orchid in his coat also reminded observers of the days that were no more—the great days of combat and of passion. When the Clerk held out to him the pen with which his son had entered his name on the roll he smiled and said, 'Thank you,' as he touched it and he replied to the Speaker's welcome with a jocular remark. This was the last time he was seen, the last time his voice was heard, in the House.

At the opening of the new Parliament the cause with which his old age was associated was still championed in its entirety by those who believed in it. The reciprocity agreement entered into by the Governments of the United States and of Canada led to the renunciation of the idea of imperial preference by one or two journals which had espoused Tariff Reform, but Mr. Lyttelton, speaking from the Unionist front bench on February 9, 1911, conveyed to Mr. Chamberlain the affectionate assurance that his friends 'had not abandoned the cause of which he was for so long the central and inspiring figure, to which he had devoted so much labour and for which he had done and suffered so much.' While treating the American reciprocity arrangement as a new proof of the necessity of their own proposals, the Tariff Reformers were greatly encouraged when it was rejected at a general election in Canada. On his 75th birthday (1911) their honoured leader, whose health was better than it had been since it broke down, received again a very large number of congratulatory messages from all parts of the empire. There was on this as on similar occasions a dinner party of his prominent followers at Prince's Restaurant, the number of the company representing the combined years of his life and of his Parliamentary membership, his favourite orchid being worn by all present. His reply to their telegram had a touch of pathos. 'I have no doubt,' he said, 'about the ultimate success of our policy, although it is late in coming.'

At the constitutional crisis in the summer of 1911, however, Mr. Chamberlain's influence failed. Unionists were divided in opinion on the tactics to be pursued with reference to the Parliament Bill for the limitation of the power of the Peers. After Mr. Asquith had, on July 20, informed the leaders of the Opposition that the King would consider it his duty to exercise his prerogative to secure the passing into law of the bill in substantially its House of Commons form, the Marquis of Lansdowne, with the approval of Mr. Balfour, advised his friends not to insist on vital amendments. Mr. Chamberlain, on the other hand, gave encouragement to those who under the leadership of aged Lord Halsbury, the ex-Lord Chancellor, persisted in a resistance which if successful would have compelled the Government to resort to a large creation of peers in order to carry their measure. 'The country,' he wrote, 'owes a great deal to Lord Halsbury, since in the crisis of her fate he has refused to surrender his principles.' His intervention on this occasion gave offence in some Unionist quarters. The *Times* disparaged advice given from 'a retirement which ill-health had for years forced upon Mr. Chamberlain,' and the *Spectator*, which held him responsible for the disastrous rejection of Mr. Lloyd George's budget by the House of Lords as well as for the present resistance of the extremists, described with candour and pungency what the Unionist party owed to the politician who eight years previously started the Tariff Reform propaganda: 'He split the party in 1903; he committed it to a fatal step in 1909; he has split it once more in 1911.' At this stage he was beaten by Mr. Balfour; the resisters who had received the blessing of Birmingham were defeated; and the Parliament Act was passed.

To his disappointment at the course of political events—the continued success of Liberalism and the long exclusion of his friends from office—a personal pang may have been added by his son's failure to obtain the Unionist leadership when it was resigned by Mr. Balfour in November, 1911. Although considerations of health influenced the ex-Prime Minister in withdrawing from the leadership, all the world believed that he had been discouraged by the dissensions among his colleagues. Mr. Austen Chamberlain had, like his father, taken the side of the constitutional 'die-hards' against the advice of the official chiefs, and on the day of Mr. Balfour's resignation he threw over the Referendum on Tariff Reform to which they had been committed and announced that a Unionist Government would carry out their fiscal principles 'without need for further mandate, sanction, or approbation.' By such dissent he lost the sympathy of some of Mr. Balfour's personal friends. The party in choosing a new leader was almost equally divided between Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Mr. Walter Long, a genial, fluent country gentleman, experienced in affairs and popular in the House. In these

circumstances the two favourites waived their own claims, and the leadership fell to Mr. Bonar Law, who had been only eleven years in Parliament and had never sat in a Cabinet, having held only a minor office. Although Mr. Bonar Law was one of the most thoroughgoing advocates of Tariff Reform his appointment could not have given unalloyed pleasure at Highbury. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, by his solid talents, his industry, and his good Parliamentary style, had established a fair claim to the first place, but in the son's case (for a time at least), as in the father's, the leadership was lost by the too eager holding out of a hand which had seemed within reach of the prize.

Liberal Unionism as a separate force ceased to exist, so far as the central organization was concerned, in 1912. It had played a powerful part in politics, but ever since the Coalition in 1895 the distinction between the allied sections gradually became slighter, and while old Liberal Unionists died, nobody was born a Liberal Unionist. The National Conservative Union and the Liberal Unionist Council were accordingly amalgamated in 1912. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain wrote expressing his approval of the amalgamation, and Mr. Austen Chamberlain announced that in future he meant to call himself a Unionist. Thus 'Liberal' dropped practically out of his life, although Liberal Unionism still survived in Birmingham.

The subsequent history of the Unionists was not quite agreeable to the Chamberlain circle. Although they won by-elections, their quarrels over food taxes were renewed. The Referendum, which the extreme Tariff Reformers had steadily opposed, was abandoned by the official leaders two years after its adoption, Lord Lansdowne, as their mouthpiece, announcing in November 14, 1912, that if they won at the general election they would be free to undertake Tariff Reform and to enter into reciprocal arrangements without further reference to the constituencies; but so great was the disquiet caused by this step among Unionist Free Fooders that Mr. Bonar Law resorted to another device, and informed the country that food duties would only be imposed if the Colonies, at a conference, considered them essential to Imperial Preference. The new device, in turn, led to a very sharp conflict, one section of Unionists still holding with Mr. Chamberlain that 'if you are to give a preference to the Colonies you must put a tax upon food,' and another crying out that the electors would never agree to a food tax. The Unionist Party in the House of Commons took the matter into their own hands, and presented to their leader in January, 1913, a memorial requesting that 'if, when a Unionist Government has been returned to power, it proves desirable, after consultation with the Dominions, to impose new duties on any articles of food in order to secure the most effective system of preference, such duties should not be imposed until they have been submitted to the people

of this country at a general election.' To this 'change of method' Mr. Bonar Law, although with reluctance, agreed. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, on the other hand, frankly refused to share the responsibility for such a decision. It really meant a return to the double election devised by Mr. Balfour in 1904. On that occasion the plan was modified in deference to the views of Mr. Chamberlain. Now, the memorial in favour of it was signed by nearly all the Unionist members. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain gave no public sign of resentment. On the contrary, in a letter to the Duke of Westminster from the Villa Victoria, Cannes, dated February 21, 1913, with reference to a fund for the Imperial Reform Campaign, he wrote: 'There is nothing in what has recently occurred to make it impossible for us to continue our propaganda on the same lines.' Still he maintained his own views. 'I have not,' he wrote to a friend on May 30, 'changed my own opinions in any way, and though a portion of our policy has been postponed, I am confident that it will ultimately be found essential to that complete imperial union for which we have so long laboured.'

While the fluctuating cause of Tariff Reform thus gave trouble to Unionists, the Liberals proceeded with their own bold reforms. In the session of 1911, in which the veto of the Lords was limited, payment of members, advocated by Mr. Chamberlain in his Radical days, but opposed by his Conservative friends, was provided for by the Government with the sanction of the House of Commons, and a social policy such as the author of the unauthorized Liberal programme of 1885 might have been proud to promote was developed in Mr. Lloyd George's scheme of national insurance, which the Conservatives praised in principle and denounced in detail. Then came in 1912-14 the renewal of old controversies in which he had been conspicuous. In the new struggle on a Home Rule Bill the famous fighter was sorely missed. And how he himself must have envied the active combatants as he sat in his invalid chair, with his head resting on his hand, brooding over the past with its thrill and glory!

All that domestic affection could do was done for the invalid, and in his old age, as Lady Dorothy Nevill¹ noted in a visit, he found a source of pleasure and amusement in his grandson, 'dear little Joe.' His family shared his interests and aims, and aided him with devotion. Mr. Neville Chamberlain in a speech in West Birmingham made a touching reference to him. 'My father,' he said, 'has had many trials in the course of what is now a long life. He has had domestic sorrows, he has had political disappointments, he has had to suffer the frustration of his ambitions and the loss of friends; and now in his closing years he is suffering under a disability which is, perhaps, more painful to him than to most men, because all his life he has been

¹ *Under Five Reigns*, Lady Dorothy Nevill.

a man of the greatest mental activity ; but his immense courage and his extraordinary patience have enabled him to go through all his trials—not excepting the last one—with an equal mind and in good spirits.’

A waiter at the refreshment room at Calais said to Mr. Neville Chamberlain, after seeing his father on his way to Cannes in 1913 : ‘ Sir, he doesn’t change, and although he comes back every year a year older, still he seems to be the same man.’ Writing from Cannes to the *British Weekly* in the spring of that year, Sir William Robertson Nicoll noted that there was little change in his appearance, though perhaps he looked a trifle older. He spent most of his time in the large and beautiful grounds attached to the Villa Victoria. Sometimes he took walks in the sun on the Boulevard du Midi, and was seen at other times in a bath chair or driving in his carriage. His return in the summer of 1913 was delayed by the serious illness of Mrs. Chamberlain. When he arrived at Charing Cross he appeared to be able to move his limbs with less labour than in some former years. A small group of spectators standing near his carriage, as he entered it, a passenger inquired, ‘ Who is that ? ’ ‘ That’s Joey,’ replied a porter. The old familiar name adhered.

At last, on January 7, 1914, the newspapers contained the announcement, made by Mr. Chamberlain in letters to the Presidents of the Liberal Unionist and Conservative Associations for West Birmingham, that he did not intend to offer himself for re-election. ‘ I have not,’ he said, ‘ come to this decision without many regrets at the severance of a connexion which has already lasted for over thirty-seven years, and has been marked on the part of my constituents by an ever-growing confidence and support ; but I cannot hope again to do my work in Parliament, and I feel that our city and the constituency need the services of a younger man who will take an active part in the Parliamentary struggle and help you to maintain the supremacy of the Unionist cause in Birmingham.’ Although the intimation caused little surprise and the blow was softened by the assurance that Mr. Chamberlain’s health was not worse, and that his interest in politics was undiminished, a note of pathos was struck by the event. Eulogistic articles appeared in the Unionist press, and sympathetic, truly appreciative references were made also by Liberal and Labour newspapers. While the former dwelt largely on his Imperialism, the latter acknowledged his services to social reform. There was a touching sound of sorrow in the resolution of the Executive of the West Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association, recording the ‘ coming severance of public and personal ties which for so many years have bound us together in affectionate relationship.’

Death came, mercifully perhaps, before the retirement could take

effect, and when it came it was unexpected. Mr. Chamberlain spent the early months of 1914 as usual at Cannes, and on his return in May, although he looked thinner and more bent than in former years, it was stated that his health had improved. Fellow passengers at Charing Cross watched sympathetically while he was assisted to his horse-drawn brougham. He made his first public appearance since his illness—and, as it proved, the last—at a garden party given to the Unionists of his own constituency and of his son's in the grounds of Highbury on June 6. Seated in a bath chair, and seeming to be in good spirits, he put out his hand to old political friends and raised his hat in acknowledgment of bursts of cheers from delighted people. 'I wish we had you with us now,' said men who had followed him in fight, whereupon he smiled and shook his head.

The next news was of his death, which occurred in London on July 2. People were startled by the intimation of the event. There had been no report of a relapse, and it was not generally known that Mr. Chamberlain had come back from Birmingham to London. The final illness was short. On Monday, June 29, he 'kept me for an hour,' his son, Mr. Austen, stated, 'while he told me his whole mind on the situation in Ireland.' On Tuesday he was taken ill. Next day he stayed in bed, and at 10.15 on the evening of Thursday, in the presence of his family, he passed peacefully away. The news, published on the following forenoon, excited profound emotion, not only in Great Britain, but throughout the empire. Messages of regret from all over the world were received, foreign countries as well as British showing their consciousness that a great man had gone. Telegrams to Mr. Austen Chamberlain included several from the royal family. The King wired an expression of heartfelt sorrow, adding, 'I deeply regret the loss of one for whom I had the greatest admiration and respect,' and subsequently His Majesty sent a letter of condolence in his own handwriting. Queen Alexandra telegraphed direct to Mrs. Chamberlain, and her secretary conveyed her very sincere sympathy to Mr. Austen on the death of 'such a distinguished father, one of the greatest men this Empire has ever known.'

An Abbey funeral for the statesman was offered to his family, but in compliance with his wishes he was buried among his own people in the simplest manner. At an hour of Sunday when comparatively few people were astir his body was conveyed from Prince's Gardens to Paddington on the way to Birmingham. There, as he passed from the railway station to Highbury, his fellow-citizens lining the route stood with uncovered heads and sorrowing faces. Next day, Monday, July 6, he was buried in Key Hill Cemetery. A service of the utmost simplicity was conducted at the Church of the Messiah, while simultaneously a memorial service was held at St. Margaret's, Westminster,

which was attended by political friends and opponents, by men conspicuous in various walks of life, by foreign diplomatists and by representatives of the colonies. Mr. Chamberlain's last journey from his home to the Church of the Messiah and thence to the cemetery was watched by crowds of people, but only the family circle stood at the graveside, when he was laid to rest beside his first and second wives and not far from his father. In that circle besides the widow were three daughters and two sons of the statesman, and his only surviving brother, Mr. Walter Chamberlain. For no man was there deeper mourning by a family.

Tributes to Mr. Chamberlain's memory were paid in both Houses of Parliament by the leaders of the Liberal and the Unionist parties. Specially fine was that from Mr. Asquith, who testified that 'in that striking personality, vivid, masterful, resolute, tenacious, there were no blurred or nebulous outlines, there were no relaxed fibres, there were no moods of doubt and hesitation, there were no pauses of lethargy or fear.' Mr. Balfour, who supplemented Mr. Bonar Law's tribute from his own wider experience, described Mr. Chamberlain as 'a great statesman, a great friend, a great orator, a great man.' Although he had never been leader of the House of Commons, nor head of a Government, the House in which he had played a foremost part, doing him an exceptional honour, adjourned its sitting in his memory. That same evening the House of Lords gave the second reading to a bill based on the assumption that Home Rule was to become law.

XLVI

A SUGGESTED EPITAPH

THE epitaph prepared for Mr. Chamberlain by Lord Rosebery was that 'in a political career of thirty years he split up both the great political parties of the State.' It was a career unequalled in destructiveness, although surpassed in constructiveness by men of immeasurably smaller talents. Mr. Chamberlain's most notable achievement in the arena of home politics was his surprising and successful fight against Home Rule. To his energy, his ingenuity, his oratory, and his influence the defeat of Mr. Gladstone's Irish schemes was in a large measure due. The greatest affair with which he was directly associated as a minister of the Crown was the Boer War. His share in that chapter of history on which the mark of blood is left has been accounted to him for fame by one set of critics and by another set for dishonour. 'He has left a united South Africa under the Union Jack,' said Sir Conan Doyle, the novelist, who classed him with Chatham and Pitt among the great empire builders, while Radicals on the other hand found the results of his policy in taxes and graves and broken hearts. As Secretary of State he assisted the movement of the time for the drawing of the colonies closer to the mother country in sympathy. There may have been exaggeration in Mr. Balfour's statement, in 1900, that 'it was during his term of office that the British Empire as a whole first showed its full and corporate consciousness of what it was and what its destinies were,' but even the Radicals admitted the happy effects of his administration in promoting an imperial sense of unity and a common glow of patriotism, and the people of the dominions themselves were grateful to him for his interest and zeal. His memory may be preserved across the seas longer even than at home, for several towns in the dominions have been named after him. Unfortunately it was as a wrecker that Mr. Chamberlain closed his official career. In renouncing his earlier fiscal beliefs he unsettled the minds of a great mass of his fellow-countrymen and drew down the Unionist party. He hoped to reconstruct it, but disabling illness came upon him without his having convinced the

United Kingdom that a safe system could be raised on the new foundations which he devised.

No bill of the first magnitude was ever carried by Mr. Chamberlain. The historian may find that he was an inspirer rather than a performer. He sowed the seed, and others reaped the harvest. One who knew him intimately described him as a great artificer of programmes and Mr. Gladstone jeered at him as a prolific parent of schemes. He was one of the most ardent advocates of free education, which the Conservatives provided while he was their ally but not their colleague. With his encouragement, too, they set up county councils and gave facilities, inadequate although these were, for allotments and small holdings. There is no doubt also that he prepared the country for old age pensions. He brought the question of pensions into current politics and yet he left to his opponents the honour of providing them. While he looked into the promised land, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George led the old folk into it. The most important bills which he personally piloted were those for bankruptcy reform while he was a Liberal, and for compensation for accidents when he became a Unionist. Many of his aspirations were unrealized. Neither the Church, nor the land, nor the school system in respect of sectarianism was freed by Mr. Chamberlain, and the power of the House of Lords was, in the end, checked against his will.

'I have an ambition,' he said in early life; 'my ambition is to leave the world a little better than I found it.' In some respects this high aim was fulfilled. No doubt, like Adam Smith on his death bed, Mr. Chamberlain could have said, 'I meant to have done more.' But he did much. He assisted to improve the lot of the poor and he stimulated political parties to promote social reform. What ill he may have done by reopening the fiscal question, and letting Protection loose, remains to be seen by those who come after him.

Which—it may be asked—was the real Mr. Chamberlain, the Mr. Chamberlain who preached Ransom, or the Mr. Chamberlain who said, 'You must put a tax on food'? Were they both real men? Was the old completely changed into the new, with a fresh set of convictions? The complexity of the strangest career of our time cannot be made plain and simple by contemporaries. They are puzzled by the earnestness with which he spoke on both sides of many great questions. Other statesmen have changed their opinions and their parties, but none so surprisingly and daringly as Mr. Chamberlain. The secret of his career lies, perhaps, in George Meredith's words, 'He has been thoughtlessly called a renegade,' wrote the novelist in 1906. 'He is merely the man of a tremendous energy acting upon one idea. Formerly it was the Radical and free trade, now it is the Tory and protectionist idea; and he is quite in earnest, altogether at the mercy of the idea animat-

ing him.' It may be said of him, as Professor Dowden has said of King Richard III, that his central characteristic was 'the necessity of releasing and letting loose upon the world the force within him, the necessity of deploying before himself and others the terrible resources of his will.'

'Now in his ashes honour.'

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- 'Die Grundlagen und die Grenzen des Chamberlainismus: studien zur Tarif-reformbewegung im gegenwärtigen England.' By Bernhard Braude, Zurich. Pp. 144.

1906

- 'Joseph Chamberlain: an Honest Biography.' By Alexander Mackintosh. An impartial record of Mr. Chamberlain's career. Pp. 462.

1909

- 'Two Jack Cades and the Peers: Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Lloyd George.' By A. Mackintosh. A booklet showing similarity in the attacks of the two statesmen on the Peers, and in the attacks on themselves.

1910

- 'Seven Years of the Sugar Convention, 1903-10.' A vindication of Mr. Chamberlain's imperial and commercial policy. By R. T. Hinckes. Pp. 53.

1914

- 'With Mr. Chamberlain in the United States and Canada, 1887-1888.' By Sir Willoughby Maycock, K.C.M.G. A record of Mr. Chamberlain's travels as a member of the Canadian Fisheries Commission.

Also many volumes of speeches and reprinted articles.

A STUDY IN CONTRADICTIONS

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S OPINIONS AT DIFFERENT STAGES

PAROCHIAL—IMPERIAL

OCTOBER 26, 1880. 'I will confess to you that I am so parochially minded that I look with greater satisfaction to our annexation of the gas and water, to our scientific frontier in the improvement area, than I do to the result of that imperial policy which has given us Cyprus and the Transvaal; and I am prouder of having been engaged with you in warring against ignorance and disease and crime in Birmingham than if I had been the author of the Zulu War, and had instigated the invasion of Afghanistan.'

JANUARY 14, 1885. 'Local government touches the domestic life of the people, their health, comfort, and happiness more closely and to a greater extent than many of the most ambitious efforts of imperial legislation.'

APRIL 19, 1887. 'I am proud of being a parochial statesman, and I will say this—that our parochial statesmen have done even more for the welfare and happiness of the people than our imperial legislature.'

JANUARY 30, 1897. 'The leaders of the Radical party forget, in the attention which they give to *these domestic controversies, which, after all, are of minor importance*—they forget the real part which this country has played and is called upon to play in the history of the world.'

OCTOBER 24, 1900. 'What should we be without our empire? Two small islands with an overcrowded population in the northern sea!'

JANUARY 6, 1902. 'We have to carry civilization, British justice, British law: we have to carry religion and Christianity to millions and millions of peoples who, until our advent, have lived in ignorance and in bitter conflict, and whose territories have fallen to us to develop. That is our duty. It is a Christian duty. *It removes altogether from us the reproach of selfishness, of parochial politics.*'

JANUARY 19, 1904. 'Learn to think imperially.'

IMPERIAL EXPANSION

AUGUST 1, 1878. 'Already the weary Titan staggers under the too vast orb of her fate.'

NOVEMBER 3, 1897. 'Is it contended that the weary Titan staggers under the too vast orb of her fate, and that we have not the strength to sustain the burden of empire?'

MARCH 27, 1879 (South African wars and 'this new Imperialism'). 'Where was this policy to stop? . . . Unless this spirit were either by Parliament or by the people at large, severely and sternly repressed, there could hardly be a limit to the responsibilities which might be fastened upon us, and none to the difficulties and even the disasters yet in store for this country.'

AUGUST 3, 1890. 'I think I may congratulate you that within the present year, without striking a blow, we have added a vast empire to the dominions of the Queen in Africa.'

FEBRUARY 2, 1893. 'We cannot imperil our position as a great nation by refusing to face any responsibilities which come to us in our character as a great nation.'

DECEMBER 19, 1882. 'The time has gone by when Lord Beaconsfield could truly declare that the policy of the English Government embraced the extension of the empire. We think our possessions are sufficiently ample, our duties and responsibilities too onerous and complicated.'

MAY 22, 1895. 'We believe in the expansion of the empire, in its legitimate development. We are not afraid to take upon ourselves the burden and the responsibility which attach to a great governing race.'

JANUARY 15, 1884. 'There is a great party in this country which seems to have learnt nothing by experience, but which is always eager for the expansion of an empire already, I should think, vast enough to satisfy the most inordinate ambition, and which taxes our resources to the utmost in the attempt to govern it well and wisely.'

JANUARY 23, 1889. 'There is a school of modern philosophy, of which the literary representative is Mr. John Morley, which shrinks from national obligations, and which, like Pilate, would wash its hands of national responsibilities.'

JINGOISM

AUGUST 1, 1878. 'The vulgar patriotism of the music-halls.'

OCTOBER 24, 1900. 'We have at last abandoned the craven fears of being great, which were the disgrace of a previous age.'

JUNE 17, 1885. By the reform of Irish administration, 'we will do more to secure the strength, the character, and the influence of the nation than by the addition of any amount, however large, to the expenditure of the nation for naval or military purposes—it will go further to maintain our weight in the councils of Europe than any amount of bluster in our relations with foreign countries.'

MARCH 20, 1893. 'I and those who agree with me believe in the expansion of the empire, and we are not at all troubled by accusations of Jingoism.'

APRIL 17, 1901. 'The only thing that makes possible this wonderful empire of ours is British prestige.'

LIBERALS AND TORIES

JANUARY 9, 1877. All the great benefits conferred by past legislation upon the wage classes had emanated from the Liberals.

FEBRUARY 3, 1880. 'I have the most sincere distrust of all Conservative reforms. It brings to my mind the mediæval legend
When the devil was sick the devil a monk would be;
When the devil got well the devil a monk was he.'

JANUARY 5, 1882. 'The Tory notion of really successful domestic statesmanship has been described in two or three lines—
To promise, pause, prepare, postpone,
And end by letting things alone;
In short, by taking people's pay
For doing nothing every day.'

JUNE 7, 1881. 'Do you want the Tories back again? Are you willing once more to relegate to a distant future all prospects of domestic reform in order to enter again upon a policy of meddlesome interference and wanton aggression?'

JULY 10, 1895. 'Give to the Conservatives, in common fairness, what is undoubtedly their due—the right to claim that they were the first to take an interest in questions affecting the material happiness and domestic lives of the people of this country.'

MAY 18, 1897. 'When I stood for Sheffield in 1874 I pointed out to my Liberal friends that they were the most backward in social legislation, and that all this legislation had been initiated and to a large extent carried out by the Tory party. I said that in 1874, and I say it in 1897.'

JULY 10, 1895. 'Let me nail to the counter another misrepresentation. The Gladstonians tell you that they are the true friends of social legislation, and that the Conservatives are opposed to it. Nothing can be more untrue.'

DECEMBER 19, 1882. 'When you come to think about it a Tory is really an object of most sincere compassion, with his history of constant defeat, of predictions falsified, of hopes disappointed.'

NOVEMBER 26, 1883. 'The Tories when they were in office did nothing; and when they are out of office do everything to prevent us from doing anything.'

JANUARY 29, 1885. 'What is it that the Tories have to offer us besides a vigorous foreign policy, which might, perchance, find places for some of their younger sons, or a tax on the food of the people which would undoubtedly raise their rents?'

JUNE 3, 1885. A contrast between the Tory Parliament of 1874 and the Liberal Parliament of 1880. 'During the whole existence of the former, with the exception perhaps of the Artisans Dwellings Act, which was unfortunately an unsuccessful but a well-meant attempt to grapple with a great social evil, there is not, as I believe, one single act of legislation to which the future historians will deem it necessary to make even a passing reference.' In the case of the Liberal Parliament of 1880, 'there has not been a single session that has passed without measures of important reform finding their place in the statute book, without grievances being redressed and wrongs being remedied.'

NOVEMBER 17, 1898. 'The Conservative party have been in a special sense the great apostles of social reform.'

JUNE 26, 1903. 'Surely it is common knowledge that all that system of legislation which has promoted the health and the comfort of the working classes, which has caused, to some extent at any rate, a rise in their wages, was due to Conservative statesmen like Lord Shaftesbury.'

NOVEMBER 21, 1905. 'When I belonged to the Radical party, so-called, I said to them what I say to you now—that social reform owes every step from the commencement and initiation of our factory legislation down to the Compensation for Accidents Bill to the constructive capacity of a Tory or Unionist Government.'

JULY 4, 1904. 'It has happened that most of our social legislation has been brought forward and carried by the Conservative and Unionist party.'

AUGUST 5, 1885. 'The Liberal party has always seemed to me the great agency of progress and reform.'

JANUARY 8, 1880.
'Here lies a Tory Ministry
Whose word no man relies on;
Who never said the things they meant,
And never did a wise one.'

OCTOBER 1, 1889. 'I have found out that they (Conservatives and Whigs) are very good fellows.'

TORYISM

NOVEMBER 26, 1883. 'The Tories are always deaf and blind on this question of Reform until they get thoroughly frightened.'

JANUARY 16, 1884. The Tories 'have apparently a rooted distrust of their fellow-countrymen, which no experience can possibly remove.'

AUGUST 4, 1884. 'The party of obstruction and of prejudice.'

OCTOBER 7, 1884. 'The Tories always have hated every extension of popular liberties.'

OCTOBER 19, 1885. 'Aye, this is Toryism all over. It is cynical, it is selfish, it is incapable.'

OCTOBER 1, 1889. 'WE ARE CONTINUALLY TAUNTED WITH HAVING BECOME TORIES. WELL, IT ALL DEPENDS UPON WHAT YOU MEAN BY TORYISM.'

JULY 6, 1892. 'I am not ashamed of the alliance with the Conservative party; I glory in it.'

PROMISE AND PERFORMANCE

JULY 23, 1884. The new voters 'will not be slow to see the difference between Tory professions and Liberal performances.'

MARCH 27, 1884. "I should like to know when the time would be opportune in the minds of the Tory party for a measure of reform."

JULY 2, 1892. 'Promise with the Unionist Government means performance.'

IRELAND

FEBRUARY 1, 1883. 'Centuries of wrong and of oppression have made Ireland what she is.'

FEBRUARY 23, 1883. 'How long is England's danger to be Ireland's opportunity? How long do you suppose the people of this country would tolerate a policy which involves the existence of a Poland within four hours of our shore?'

JULY 6, 1886. 'I think that on the whole Ireland has had more justice than England and Wales and Scotland.'

FEBRUARY 17, 1893. 'The reason why we are opposed to separation is because of the geographical situation of Ireland, and because Ireland within a few hours of our shores cannot become independent without being a source of danger to the very existence of the empire.'

HOME RULE

JUNE 4, 1885. 'Mr. Gladstone has removed two of the greatest grievances of Ireland. He has disestablished an alien Church and he has reformed the land laws. But there remains a question as important, possibly more important, than both these two, and that is to give, in Mr. Gladstone's own words, the widest possible self-government to Ireland, which is consistent with the maintenance of the integrity of the empire.'

JUNE 13, 1885. 'We have to recognize and to satisfy the national sentiment which both in Scotland and in Ireland has led to a demand for the control of purely domestic affairs. And these objects can only be secured, I believe, by some great measure of devolution, by which the imperial Parliament shall maintain its supremacy, but shall nevertheless relegate to subordinate authorities the control and administration of their local business.'

JULY 2, 1886. 'You are asked to pay a hundred and fifty millions (under the Land Bill) to set up a rival Parliament in Dublin; aye, a rival and a competitor to the great Parliament at Westminster, the mother of Parliaments, the type and the model of free institutions throughout the globe, and the one only security and guarantee for the rights and the liberties and the property of all Her Majesty's subjects. . . . You are asked to stake upon the hazard of a die the authority and the influence, perhaps even the existence of the empire. All I can say is I will never be a party to such a dangerous and a ruinous speculation.'

JULY 6, 1886. 'That is the price you are asked to pay for enabling the Irish to manage their own affairs—in other words, for allowing the enemies of England to set up a rival Parliament in Dublin.'

JUNE 17, 1885. 'The pacification of Ireland at this moment depends on the concession to Ireland of the right to govern itself in the matter of its purely domestic business.'

SEPTEMBER 15, 1885. 'I have proposed that there should be established in Ireland and in Scotland, perhaps also in Wales and in England, national councils for dealing with affairs which although they are national, are yet not of imperial concern.'

APRIL 9, 1886. 'I have never been opposed to Home Rule as I have explained and as I have always understood the words, and as the Prime Minister has on many public occasions defined it.'

JUNE 19, 1886. 'I have always been a Home Ruler.'

MARCH 12, 1887. If certain objections could be met he was 'ready to accept any scheme for conferring on Ireland legislative authority to deal with its exclusively domestic concerns.'

APRIL 15, 1887. 'We are both Liberals and Home Rulers.'

APRIL 18, 1887. 'I was a Home Ruler long before Mr. Gladstone.'

FEBRUARY 4, 1893. 'We object to Home Rule because we believe that it would be dangerous to the security of this country; and it would be a base desertion of our loyal fellow-subjects in that country if we were to hand them over to the Roman Catholic priests and to the delegates of the National League.'

FEBRUARY 4, 1893. 'Home Rule as a practical policy is as dead as Queen Anne.'

APRIL 10, 1893 (Second Home Rule Bill). 'We are asked to stake the dignity, the influence, the honour, and the wealth of the nation upon this cast. . . . Sir, I say the possible danger is too great and the possible gain is too small.'

FEBRUARY 13, 1896. The basis of our objection to Home Rule for Ireland is that it would endanger the security of this country.'

RETENTION OF IRISH MEMBERS

MAY 7, 1886. 'The key of the position is the maintenance of the full representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament.'

JULY 13, 1893. 'The issue is whether the interests of Great Britain are to be controlled by delegates from Ireland, nominated by priests, elected by illiterates, and subsidized by the enemies of this country.'

COERCION

JUNE 7, 1881. 'For my part I hate coercion : I hate the name and I hate the thing.'

OCTOBER 25, 1881. 'With the Tories coercion is a policy ; with us it is only a hateful incident.'

JUNE 3, 1885. 'Coercion may be necessary at times. . . . But coercion is for an emergency.'

SEPTEMBER 26, 1888. 'Coercion—that is to say, the force which is necessary in order to maintain the law of the land.'

HOUSE OF LORDS

OCTOBER 25, 1881. 'That bourne from which no Liberal bill returns.'

AUGUST 4, 1884. 'During the last hundred years the House of Lords has never contributed one iota to popular liberties or popular freedom, or done anything to advance the common weal ; and during that time it has protected every abuse and sheltered every privilege.'

OCTOBER 20, 1884. 'That club of Tory landlords which in its Gilded Chamber has disposed of the welfare of the people with almost exclusive regard to the interests of a class.'

OCTOBER 20, 1884. The peers and their robes and coronets 'are ancient monuments, and I, for one, should be very sorry to deface them ; but, gentlemen, I do not admit that we can build upon these interesting ruins the foundations of our government.'

MARCH 19, 1892. 'Although the House of Peers is a good deal threatened nowadays, in all probability it will outlive most of us and will remain for several generations to come—a picturesque and a stately, if not a supremely important part of the British Constitution.'

SEPTEMBER 20, 1893. 'The House of Lords deserves the gratitude of the people of Great Britain for standing up for their rights and preventing them from being over-ridden by a disloyal Irish faction.'

OCTOBER 20, 1884. 'The chronicles of the House of Lords are one long record of concessions delayed until they have lost their grace, of rights denied until extorted from their fears.'

OCTOBER 20, 1884. 'We have been too long a peer-ridden nation.'

NOVEMBER 4, 1884. 'For more than half a century we have meekly submitted to be baffled and trampled on by a handful of hereditary legislators who do not legislate but who only impede legislation.'

OCTOBER 20, 1884. 'I have no spite against the House of Lords, but as a Dissenter I have an account to settle with them, and I promise you I will not forget the reckoning. . . . The cup is nearly full.'

OCTOBER 1, 1885. 'The House of Lords has always been the obsequious handmaid of the Tory party.'

OCTOBER 14, 1885. 'There is the question of mending or ending the Second Chamber, which, without any pretence to popular authority, nevertheless arrogates to itself the right of delaying, disfiguring, and sometimes destroying all the work which is carried out by the other branch of the Legislature.'

JUNE 2, 1894. 'I say the Lords have but done their duty. They have appealed to the nation to decide between them and the Government on this great issue.'

FEBRUARY 8, 1894. 'What are you going to attack the House of Lords for? This cry about the House of Lords is a purely artificial one; it is got up for party purposes.'

DECEMBER 8, 1898. 'The House of Lords destroyed the Home Rule Bill, and for that alone it has earned the undying gratitude of this generation.'

FEBRUARY 8, 1894. 'The Lords have exercised their constitutional right; they have the right to examine bills and, if they see fit, to amend and improve them.'

OCTOBER 16, 1894. 'I am no apologist for the constitution of the House of Lords; I am no defender of hereditary legislation; but I am a strong upholder of a Second Chamber, and until you can find me a better I am going to stick to the House of Lords.'

DISESTABLISHMENT

OCTOBER, 1874. 'The separation of Church and State . . . has been felt by every member of the Liberal party to be at some time or other inevitable, although many have been glad enough to postpone its immediate consideration. There are plain indications that the time is approaching when men must definitely take sides on the question which may well be the new point of departure for the Liberal party.'

SEPTEMBER 29, 1887. 'The question of religious equality . . . is ripe for discussion and for public consideration, and it ought not to be put aside.'

SEPTEMBER 4, 1889. 'I have always held that the Church of England would gain if she rested upon voluntary support and if she did without the assistance and the control of the State.'

OCTOBER 13, 1891. 'I have voted for disestablishment because I thought that in the interests of religion, in the interests of the Church itself, and in the interests of the harmony of all classes of the nation it would be better that the Church should depend upon the devotion and the loyalty and the self-sacrifice of its own supporters rather than that it should accept the invidious assistance and control of the State.'

MARCH 30, 1892. 'It is neither defensible in principle nor in policy to put this question (disestablishment) forward to the exclusion of every other.'

NOVEMBER 22, 1894. 'You may, if you like, try to disestablish and disendow the Church in Wales, and if you succeed, in my opinion—although I sympathize with the object as a matter of abstract principle—nobody will be one penny the better for it.'

DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS

JANUARY 24, 1872. 'The representatives of the ratepayer must have absolute control of all national funds applied to secular education; all grants for this purpose made to denominational bodies must be withdrawn.'

APRIL 3, 1872. 'Let the State keep to its proper work and fit its children to take their places as citizens of a great empire, and let it leave their religious training, and all that concerns their education for the kingdom which is not of this world, to the care of the Churches and the responsibility of the parents.'

OCTOBER 1, 1885. 'To my mind the spectacle of so-called national schools turned into a private preserve by clerical managers, and used for exclusive purposes of politics or religion, is one which the law ought not to tolerate.'

JANUARY, 1877. 'The efforts of all lovers of justice, and of all friends of education, must now be directed to the establishment of the principle that representation shall go hand in hand with taxation, and that no grant of national or local funds shall be made to any school a majority of whose managing body does not consist of representatives elected by the district for the purpose.'

MAY 25, 1888. 'The friends of the denominational system would have to submit to local control if they accepted aid from the rates.'

MAY 25, 1888. 'No practical statesman would dare to propose a measure which would be followed by the immediate withdrawal or extinction of the voluntary system.'

FEBRUARY 21, 1890. 'It is proposed that when additional grants are given to all schools there should be popular control of voluntary schools. . . . It would be ridiculous to suppose that the supporters of voluntary schools would accept any such plan. The proposal, in short, is a proposal for the extinction of the voluntary system. Very well, that is a practically intolerable proposition.'

JUNE 29, 1891. 'You have to tell the ratepayers that if they want Board schools instead of voluntary schools they have to find something like forty millions in cash and an extra rate of two millions a year. I do not believe that the people of this country are prepared to pay that price for what is only a counsel of perfection.'

JUNE 29, 1891. 'However desirable this public control of voluntary schools may be, it is impossible, as a matter of policy, to secure it by forcing it on the voluntary schools.'

LIQUOR TRAFFIC

FEBRUARY 10, 1880. 'The Conservative party had played into the hands of the publicans and contracted with them a degrading alliance.'

OCTOBER 14, 1885 (Liquor Traffic). 'We trust the people, and we trust them wholly; and we are willing that the whole of this great question should be left absolutely to the representative authorities which will be elected throughout the country.'

MAY, 1876 (*The Right Method with the Publicans*). 'No doubt there are causes at work which tend to the ultimate eradication of everything, but why must the present generation go on wearing the devil's chain? It is no comfort to families whose happiness has been wrecked and their homes made desolate by the drunkenness of some relative to hear that in a century or two a millennium may be expected in which the evils of drinking will disappear?'

JULY 6, 1895 (Local Veto Bill). 'It proposes to deal with the private property of men who are, for the main part, just as respectable as any other tradesmen.'

JULY 6, 1895 (Local Veto Bill). 'I protest against this bill. . . . It proposes to interfere with public-houses, which are the convenience and the meeting-place of the working classes, and to leave untouched the private cellars and clubs and even the railway stations, which are frequented by the well-to-do.'

JULY 6, 1895 (Opposing Local Veto Bill). 'If you want to stop drinking—if you think it impossible, which I do not, to stop drunkenness without stopping drinking—then be consistent: take the rich as well as the poor. If you want to stop drinking, have the courage of your opinions and make drinking a penal offence; or if you won't do that, at all events make laws against the sale and against the manufacture of liquor under all circumstances.'

VESTED INTERESTS

OCTOBER, 1874. (*Fortnightly Review*). 'The Conservative party is principally composed of the privileged classes and their respective parasites; and a species of half-conscious log-rolling goes on, in which the holders of special immunities and advantages—the landowners and the game preservers, the licensed victualler and the Established parson—all take part, and combine to resist the aggression which threatens any of their separate interests.'

MAY 29, 1888. 'When any legitimate interest, which had been brought into existence with the sanction of the Legislature, was interfered with on public grounds it was the duty of the community to compensate those whose interest was disturbed.'

REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 12, 1870. Supports a resolution rejoicing that the irrepressible instinct of the French people for the divine right of self-government has led to the re-establishment of their Republic.

DECEMBER 5, 1872. 'Very few intelligent people do not now hold that the best form of government for a free and enlightened people is that of a Republic. That was the form of Government to which the nations of Europe were surely and not very slowly tending.'

JULY 29, 1889. 'Honourable members tell us it is a shameful thing to fawn upon a monarch. So it is; but it is a still more shameful thing to truckle to a multitude. . . . We enjoy the fullest measure of political liberty under a constitution which is more democratic than exists in any Republic of Europe or of the world.'

ARISTOCRACY

SEPTEMBER 24, 1885. 'I have been made the mark for the malignant hatred of the aristocratic and landowning classes.'

JULY 24, 1885. 'The democratic revolution is not to be accomplished by aristocratic perverts.'

OCTOBER 14, 1885. 'I cannot call to mind one single great or beneficent reform which has been promoted at the instigation of the landed gentry, or which has not received their persistent hostility.'

JUNE 3, 1905. 'I have the highest respect for dukes and for all the aristocracy.'

PLURAL REPRESENTATION

JANUARY 29, 1885. 'I am in favour of the principle of one man one vote, and I object altogether to the plural representation of property. . . . If we are to make a distinction, I am not quite certain whether it is not the poor man who ought to have more votes than the rich one.'

APRIL 30, 1895. 'There is the case of persons who hold two estates or two properties in different constituencies, but who only reside upon one. These persons are absentee voters, although they have substantial local interests and qualifications; and as to them I will say that, as

the original basis of the franchise undoubtedly was local interest and qualification, you are going to make a very serious constitutional change if you deprive them of their votes.'

APRIL 30, 1895. 'But a still stronger case is the case of persons with double residences. That is a case of the greatest importance; and if honourable gentlemen think they have got a good electoral cry in abolishing the plural votes of these people they will find they are greatly mistaken.'

EQUAL ELECTORAL DISTRICTS

MARCH 27, 1884. 'I don't care a straw for equal electoral districts.'

MARCH 3, 1891. 'I have spoken in favour of equal electoral districts. . . . I am still in favour of all those reforms.'

LABOUR REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 29, 1885. 'I rejoice to think that under the altered conditions opportunity will be found to give to Mr. Burt and Mr. Broadhurst, who have represented the cause of labour with so much ability and so much independence in the present Parliament, colleagues who will follow their example and who will strengthen their hands.'

JUNE 9, 1893. 'I think I can speak for the working classes in Birmingham and the district. Their feeling is, that all the restrictions which they believe to be greatly to the advantage of the working classes which have been secured by legislation, have been secured, in the first instance, against the wishes of the employers of labour, by the efforts of the Trades Unions and the special representatives of the working classes.'

SEPTEMBER 29, 1900. 'I have been for nearly five-and-twenty years in Parliament; during that time I have known every self-called champion of labour who has ever sat in that great assembly, and to the best of my recollection not a single one of these gentlemen has ever initiated or carried legislation for the benefit of the working classes, but they have hindered it occasionally. When they come into Parliament their only use is as items in a voting machine.'

JANUARY, 1884. 'It is ridiculous for Trades Unionists to pretend that they can keep themselves outside politics. The exclusion of politics from the sphere of Trades Union work would be a practical abnegation of the most vital interests of the working classes.'

JUNE 2, 1894. 'I say that the present so-called labour members in the House of Commons are notoriously, and in the sight of every man, mere fetchers and carriers for the Gladstonian party.'

INNUENDO AGAINST RUSSIA

FEBRUARY 4, 1878. 'Throughout the speeches of members of the Government there ran one continual innuendo against the good faith of Russia. They had put on the conduct of the Russian Government and on the words of her diplomatists and the action of her emperor the most offensive possible construction, and the result was great indignation on the part of the Russian people against this country.'

MAY 13, 1898. (Referring to the methods by which Russia secured the occupation of Port Arthur): 'Who sups with the devil must have a long spoon.'

MR. GLADSTONE

DECEMBER 19, 1882. 'The noblest figure in English political history.'

JULY 8, 1892. 'The furious mob orator! He appears to be losing his head and losing his temper.'

DECEMBER 19, 1882. 'So far from Mr. Gladstone being a tyrant, I say there is no man in the House of Commons—I do not believe there is any man in the country—who is so ready to receive suggestions, so anxious to appreciate the case of an opponent, so willing to give consideration to any new light that can be thrown upon a subject.'

APRIL 10, 1890. 'An imperious leader.'

DECEMBER 19, 1882. 'Fifty years of honoured and honourable public life.'

JULY 27, 1893. 'It is always the voice of a god! Never since the time of Herod has there been such slavish adulation.'

JANUARY 16, 1883. 'Mr. Gladstone's retirement from the

scene upon which he had played so illustrious a part would be an incalculable misfortune for his country.'

NOVEMBER 4, 1884. 'Our noble cause has a noble leader, in the man whose deep sympathy with the people, whose pervading trust in his fellow-countrymen has raised him to the height of this great empire and has secured for him in the hearts and affection of his fellow countrymen a permanent and an abiding resting place.'

JUNE 3, 1885. 'Mr. Gladstone will stand before posterity as the greatest man of his time.'

JUNE 3, 1885. 'Remarkable for his personal character and for the high tone that he has introduced into our political and public life.'

LORD SALISBURY

OCTOBER 25, 1881. 'Lord Salisbury's memory is notorious.'

MARCH 30, 1883. 'Lord Salisbury surveys the Liberal policy with jaundiced eyes, through glasses which are coloured by temper and by prejudice.'

MARCH 30, 1883. 'Lord Salisbury constitutes himself the spokesman of the class "who toil not, neither do they spin."'

JULY 23, 1884. 'An air of patrician arrogance.'

APRIL 28, 1885. 'The speeches are distinguished by the characteristic invective of the noble lord, also by his characteristic inaccuracy.'

JULY 2, 1886. 'You have a Prime Minister in the very height of his popularity, turning round upon himself and making an abject surrender to a vile conspiracy.'

APRIL 10, 1890. 'Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule policy was conceived in secrecy, was born in deceit, and it has been nurtured on evasion.'

NOVEMBER 30, 1899. 'Nothing that Lord Salisbury said of me, and nothing that I ever said of him, ever prevented our co-operating cordially upon what, fortunately, we were both able to believe was for the interests of the nation. When we came together to look at the merits of some of those propositions which otherwise might have been the subject of party criticism we found that we were entirely agreed.'

WAR WITH BOERS

MAY 8, 1896. 'War with the Boers would leave behind it embers of a strife which generations would hardly be long enough to extinguish.'

MARCH 20, 1902. 'We are establishing British supremacy, and when we have established British supremacy I for one do not anticipate those terrible consequences from the racial feeling which now prevails at the present time.'

OLD AGE PENSIONS

MARCH 17, 1891. 'My own ideas, my own plans,' for making provision for old age.

JULY 8, 1892. 'You know perfectly well that for some years I have been advocating a system of old age pensions.'

JULY 2, 1892. 'I ask you to pledge yourselves to the great principle that it is the duty of the State to provide for the veterans of industry just as it provides for the veterans of the army and navy.'

JULY 16, 1892. 'My old age pension scheme holds the field.'

JULY 12, 1895. 'My proposal, broadly, is so simple that any one can understand it.'

APRIL 4, 1894. 'I look forward to the time when some Minister will be found bold enough to propose to lay aside experimentally what may be considered a reasonable sum towards the commencement of a system of old age pensions, and if that is satisfactory, I am not disposed to place any limit on its ultimate development.'

MAY 29, 1901. 'This question of old age pensions, as it is sometimes called, although that is a description which I personally dislike.'

APRIL 24, 1899. 'It was a proposal, not a promise.'

OCTOBER 25, 1901. 'I never promised old age pensions.'

1905 (Letter to Sir F. Milner). 'I have never in my life made a definite promise of old age pensions.'

1899. 'Any universal scheme for giving pensions to everybody is beyond the resources of the State.'

MAY 3, 1894. 'I want to give facilities to working men—to all men, aye! and to all women, to make provision against their old age.'

SEPTEMBER 29, 1900. 'What I promised was not universal old age pensions, which I do not believe in.'

MAY 3, 1894. 'The Government (Liberal) have appointed a Commission to inquire into the subject. That has meant a delay of two years. I think myself the time might have been employed in inquiring into the details of a practicable measure.'

NOVEMBER 15, 1898. 'I do not think it is possible immediately to deal with this question. There are financial considerations to be taken into account, and there are other matters, perhaps, which may have a still more pressing claim upon the Government.'

FREE TRADE AND PROTECTION COBDEN'S PREDICTIONS

JULY 1, 1883 (a Sunday paper had said Cobden would be chiefly known as the author of a number of predictions which had been falsified by events). 'Nearly nineteen centuries have passed, and still the doctrines of the Christian religion have not received universal acceptance, and I suppose we should think it a little presumptuous, even in a Sunday paper with a limited circulation, to describe the apostles as very worthy fishermen who were chiefly to be remembered as the authors of a variety of predictions which have been falsified by events.'

JULY 1, 1883. 'In judging Mr. Cobden we have to consider not whether the world has been wise enough to adopt his views, but whether anything has occurred since his death that has weakened the force of the argument which he used or that has thrown the slightest doubt on the conclusions at which he arrived. Tried by this test I think that Free Trade will successfully stand the experiment.'

OCTOBER 7, 1903. 'There was nothing upon which Mr. Cobden was more assured, than that Free Trade was such a good thing that if we gave the example every other nation would follow us. . . . Well, I do not believe that all those people (Americans, Germans, French) are fools, and when I find that they absolutely refuse to adopt the Cobdenite principle, and to accept Free Trade, I say to myself, it is worth thinking over.'

ONE-SIDED FREE TRADE

MARCH 24, 1882. 'The conclusion to be drawn from the facts before us is that our present system of one-sided Free Trade, as honourable gentlemen opposite call it, is absolutely the very best that can be devised with regard to British interests and the interests of British trade.'

'Even if other countries have progressed more than we have, I should have said that that proved nothing either for or against Protection, because in dealing with this matter it must be borne in mind what a multiplicity of factors we have to take into consideration in estimating the relative progress of foreign nations compared with our own.'

JUNE 13, 1885. 'Although we cannot show any great change of opinion in foreign countries, yet at least we can find in their experience conclusive proof of the soundness of Mr. Cobden's doctrines and a great cause of congratulation for this country.'

FEBRUARY 16, 1905. 'Free imports are not Free Trade. They stand in the way of freer trade. We have never had Free Trade.'

OCTOBER 6, 1903. 'The protected countries have progressed in an infinitely better proportion than ourselves.'

NOVEMBER 4, 1903. 'How do our opponents account for the fact that every foreign country without exception, which has adopted Protection, has, in recent years at any rate, progressed much more rapidly, in much greater proportion than we, the Free Trade country of the world?'

EXCESS OF IMPORTS

JUNE 13, 1881. 'The imports from France to this country have not shown any steady or consistent increase. Even if they had I should differ from the honourable member in considering that state of things injurious to this country.'

OCTOBER 26, 1881. 'Mr. Mi-cawber said that if your incomings were £20 and your out-

OCTOBER 7, 1903. 'As soon as tariffs were raised against us, our exports to the countries which raised them have been continually decreasing. Yes, but that is not all. If their prosperity had been going down in equal proportion, it would have been no argument at all. But while our exports to them have been continually decreasing, their exports to us have been continually increasing.'

goings £19 19s. 6d. the result was happiness, and that if your incomings were £20 and your outgoings £20 os. 6d. the result was misery. This is precisely the result which the Fair Traders desire to produce in our national relations.'

AUGUST 12, 1881. 'An excess of imports over exports causes much anxiety to a certain class of persons in this country, and is regarded by them as a sign of weakness and a proof of our commercial decline. I consider it, on the contrary, as a fact which ought to give us the greatest satisfaction.'

MARCH 30, 1895. 'The real fact is that every pennyworth of foreign goods that comes into this country is paid for by a similar amount of either English goods directly, or English work in the shape of, for instance, the freight of shipping transport.'

OCTOBER 7, 1903. 'In the course of the twenty years since 1882, the total imports of foreign manufactures have increased £64,000,000. Meanwhile, our exports of manufactures to these countries have increased £12,000,000. So that, on the balance, we have lost £52,000,000. . . . What would this £52,000,000 of money have given to you if you had been able to keep it? It would have provided subsistence for one and a half millions of people.'

STATE OF TRADE

MARCH 31, 1897. 'Let us have confidence in the future. I do not ask you to anticipate with Lord Macaulay the time when the New Zealander will come here to gaze upon the ruins of a great dead city. No; I see no signs of decrepitude or decay.'

JANUARY 6, 1902. 'I see no signs of any imminent or pressing danger to the prosperity of the country. During the last five years we have enjoyed an unparalleled condition of trade, and although we cannot expect that

OCTOBER 6, 1903. 'If our Imperial trade declines or if it does not increase in proportion to our population and to the loss of trade with foreign countries, then we sink at once into a fifth-rate nation. Our fate will be the fate of the empires and kingdoms of the past.'

OCTOBER 6, 1903. 'I tell you that it is not well to-day with British industry.'

'I see signs of decay in British trade, I see cracks and crevices in the walls of the great structure.'

to last for ever, and although there are some signs that trade is not as brisk as it was, the prospects are extremely good, and I am not at all disposed to take a pessimistic view of the future.'

OCTOBER 7, 1903. 'Agriculture has been practically destroyed; sugar has gone; silk has gone; iron is threatened; cotton will go.'

TAX ON FOOD

AUGUST 12, 1881. 'Is any one bold enough to propose that we should put duties upon food?'

OCTOBER 6, 1903. 'I propose to put a low duty on foreign corn, not exceeding 2s. a quarter.'

AUGUST 12, 1881. 'A tax on food would mean a decline in wages; it would certainly involve a reduction in their productive value; it would raise the price of every article produced in the United Kingdom; and it would indubitably bring about the loss of our gigantic export trade.'

JUNE 26, 1903. 'Even suppose the tax upon corn increases the price of bread, does that necessarily increase the cost of living? Man does not live by bread alone.'

OCTOBER 27, 1903. 'I pledge myself that my proposals will not add one farthing to the cost of living of any family in the country.'

NOVEMBER 7, 1885. 'If you are going to tax the bread of the people you will affect every household in the land and you will throw back the working classes of this country to the starvation wages and to the destitution from which Mr. Gladstone and Sir Robert Peel relieved them.'

NOVEMBER 4, 1903. 'Let us get rid of all this idea that Protection is immediately followed by starvation and destitution. This is absolutely untrue. Let us get rid of the idea that Free Trade necessarily brings prosperity. That is altogether untrue.'

COLONIAL PREFERENCE AND FOOD TAX

1882. 'The transfer of the importation of corn from foreign countries to our colonies will be the worse for us; it will deviate capital from growing corn to manufactures.'

1903. 'Without preferential treatment of the colonies we shall lose the colonies.'

MARCH 24, 1882. 'I do not know whether the honourable member thinks you can tax food without raising its price. I would at any rate lay down the axiom

OCTOBER 6, 1903. 'If you wish to have colonial preference, you must put a tax on food. . . . Nothing that I propose would add one farthing to the cost of living.'

that that is impossible ; and it is only by increasing the price that the object of Mr. Ecroyd (in promoting a colonial union) can be achieved.'

SHIPPING AND FREE TRADE

OCTOBER 27, 1881. 'Great has been the advance which has taken place in every branch of commercial enterprise ; that advance has been more extraordinary, and, above all, more continuous, in shipping than in anything else, and I shall not forget—neither will you—that it has taken place under, and is, I believe, distinctly in consequence of, that entire freedom of trade which has marked the policy of this country for the last generation.'

OCTOBER 27, 1903. 'I say to those who are concerned in the shipping industry—you will benefit by this policy (Tariff Reform) ; you can't lose by it. . . . My case is that British shipping, admirable as its condition is in many respects, is not progressing so fast as foreign shipping.'

EFFECT OF PROTECTION

APRIL 28, 1885. 'We have only to recall the history of those times when Protection starved the poor, and when the country was brought by it to the brink of revolution.'

NOVEMBER 7, 1885. . . . 'Those bad times of Protection and of the Corn Laws which were responsible for the destitution and the starvation wages, from which your forefathers suffered so greatly.'

JANUARY 14, 1885. 'The condition of the farmer was never so hopeless, and the state of the labourer was never so abject as when corn was kept up at a high value by a prohibitive or protective duty. The food of the people was taxed to raise the rents of the landlord.'

NOVEMBER 4, 1903. 'Is it true that, at the time when Free Trade was introduced and the Corn Laws were repealed, we were in a state of destitution and misery and starvation ? Is it true that under the Protection which prevailed before that, this country was going down in the scale of nations or losing its prosperity and losing its trade ? No ; absolutely not ! The exact reverse was the case. There was a time of great prosperity in this country under Protection.'

EFFECT OF FREE TRADE

MARCH 24, 1882. 'I ask the House to reject the motion (for inquiry into foreign tariffs), because it appears to me to involve a reversal of the policy (of Free Trade) under which the prosperity of the country has increased and its resources have developed, under which wages have risen, the necessities of life become cheaper, and, above all, the causes of just discontent been removed, and much has been done to settle on a secure basis the foundations of settled government and social order.'

OCTOBER 20, 1903. 'While there has been a great increase of prosperity in this country, it has not been due, and it can be shown not to be due, to Free Trade, but it has been due to other things, of which Free Trade, however, may be one.'

NOVEMBER 4, 1903. 'It is true that after the repeal of the Corn Laws this country entered on a period, which lasted for twenty-five years, of what I may call unparalleled prosperity. I do not deny it, but I say it had nothing whatever to do with the repeal of the Corn Laws, and very little to do with the introduction of Free Trade.'

'WHAT I HAVE SAID, I HAVE SAID'

THE OLD RADICALISM OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S
SPEECHES.¹

HOUSE OF LORDS

ARE the Lords to dictate to us, the people of England? Are the Lords to dictate to us the laws which we should make and the way in which we should bring them in? Are you going to be governed by yourselves—or will you submit to an oligarchy which is the mere accident of birth? Your ancestors resisted kings and abated the pride of monarchs, and it is inconceivable that you should be so careless of your great heritage as now to submit your liberties to this miserable minority of individuals who rest their claims upon privilege and upon accident. . . . I have always thought the House of Lords was a very picturesque institution, attractive from its connexion with the history of our country. I have no desire to see a dull uniformity of social life; and I am rather thankful than otherwise to gentlemen who will take the trouble to wear robes and coronets and who will keep up a certain state of splendour which is very pleasant to look upon. They are ancient monuments, and I should be very sorry to deface them. But I don't admit that we can build upon these interesting ruins the foundation of our government. . . . The chronicles of the House of Lords are one long record of concessions delayed until they have lost their grace, of rights denied until extorted from their fears. It has been the history of one long contest between the representatives of privilege and the representatives of popular rights, and during that time the Lords have perverted, delayed, and denied justice until at last they have grudgingly and churlishly conceded to force alone what they could no longer withhold. In the meantime what mischief has been wrought, what evils have been developed that might have been stayed in their inception, what wrongs have been inflicted and endured that ought long ago to have been redressed! We are told that the object of a Second Chamber is to stay the gusts of popular agitation and to give the nation time for reflection. I defy any student of history to point to one single case in which the House of Lords has ever stayed the gust of public passion or checked a foolish popular impulse. (Denbigh, October 20, 1884).

It is said that the House of Lords will not give way. Then I say,

¹ The extracts are, with few exceptions, taken from the reports in the *Birmingham Daily Post*.

neither will the people submit. We are in favour of Government by the people and for the people, and we repudiate the presumptuous claim to usurp the prerogative of the Crown, to degrade the House of Commons, and humiliate all who bear the name or claim the rights of free men. We grudge the Lords nothing that rightly belongs to them, nothing they can enjoy without injury to others—their rank and title, their stars and garters, any influence which their personal qualities can gain for them, any power that they may secure by long prescription and high station; but their claim to dictate the laws which we shall make, the way in which we shall govern ourselves—to spoil, delay, and even reject measures demanded by the popular voice, passed after due discussion by a majority of the people's House, and receiving the sanction and confirmation of popular assemblies such as this—is a claim contrary to reason, opposed to justice, and which we will resist to the death. (Hanley, October 7, 1884).

LORDS AND DISSENTERS

I have no spite against the House of Lords, but as a Dissenter I have an account to settle with them, and I promise you I will not forget the reckoning. I boast a descent of which I am as proud as any baron may be of the title which he owes to the smiles of a king or to the favour of a king's mistress, for I can claim descent from one of the two thousand ejected ministers who, in the time of the Stuarts, left home and work and profit rather than accept the State-made creed which it was sought to force upon them; and for that reason, if for no other, I share your hopes and your aspirations, and I resent the insults, the injuries, and the injustice from which you have suffered so long at the hands of a privileged assembly. But the cup is nearly full. The career of high-handed wrong is coming to an end. The House of Lords have alienated Ireland, they have oppressed the Dissenters, and they now oppose the enfranchisement of the people. We have been too long a peer-ridden nation and I hope you will say to them, that if they will not bow to the mandate of the people they shall lose for ever the authority which they have so long abused. (Denbigh, October 20, 1884.).

THE IRISH PROBLEM

I believe that one of the greatest of Irish problems is still before us and must wait for its solution to the new Parliament whose advent we anticipate with so much interest and with such expectation. Mr. Gladstone has removed two of the greatest grievances of Ireland. He has disestablished an alien Church and he has reformed the land laws. But there remains a question as important—possibly even more important than both these two, and that is to give, in Mr. Gladstone's own words, the widest possible self-government to Ireland which is consistent with the maintenance of the integrity of the empire. What we have to do is to conciliate the national sentiment of Ireland. We

have to find a safe mean between separation on the one hand, which would be disastrous to Ireland and dangerous to England, and, on the other hand, that excessive centralization which throws upon the English Parliament and upon English officials the duty and burden of supervising every petty detail of Irish local affairs, which stifles the national life, which destroys the sense of responsibility, which keeps the people in ignorance of the duties and functions of Government, and which produces a perpetual feeling of irritation while it obstructs all necessary legislation. (Birmingham, June 3, 1885).

HOME RULE

What are the great problems of the future? We have to deal with obstruction in the House of Commons. We have to deal with the system under which the greatest legislative assemblage in the world has begun to lose its usefulness, and in consequence lose its influence. And that result can never be accomplished so long as the Imperial Parliament is burdened with an ever-increasing amount of petty detail with which it is incompetent to deal, and which ought to be referred to other bodies. We have also to recognize and to satisfy the national sentiment, which is in itself a praiseworthy and a patriotic and an inspiring feeling, and which both in Scotland and Ireland has led to a demand for the control of purely domestic affairs. And these objects can only be secured, I believe, by some great measure of devolution, by which the Imperial Parliament shall maintain its supremacy, but shall nevertheless relegate to subordinate authorities the control and administration of their local business. I believe that in this way only is there any chance of our being able to remove the deeply-rooted discontent which follows as a natural consequence from the attempt of one nation to control and interfere with the domestic and the social economy of another, whose genius it does not understand, whose pressing necessities it is not in a position to appreciate, whose business it has not time to attend to, and whose prejudices and whose preferences it is impossible, even with the very best intentions, to avoid sometimes ignoring or offending. I look forward with confidence to the opportunity which will be afforded in the new Parliament for the consideration of this most momentous question, and I believe that in the successful accomplishment of its solution lies the only hope of the pacification of Ireland, and of the maintenance of the strength and integrity of the empire which are in danger, which are gravely compromised so long as an integral portion of Her Majesty's dominions can only be governed by exceptional legislation, and so long as it, in consequence, continues to be discontented and estranged. (Cobden Club, June 13, 1885).

IRELAND, ‘A POLAND!’

When the conspirators have been crushed out, what are we to do for the Irish people? How are we to meet the discontent which it is

admitted still prevails in that country? Does the right hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Gibson) really think it is possible we can go on governing Ireland permanently by a system of absolute repression and nothing else? How long will such a policy bear the test of experience? How long is England's danger to be Ireland's opportunity? How long do you suppose the people of this country would tolerate a policy which involved the existence of a Poland within four hours of our shores? I say that a policy of that kind will break down in practice, as it deserves to break down, and thus you will be once more face to face with what has been truly called the greatest problem of our time. (House of Commons, February 23, 1883). |

IRELAND'S 'FOREIGN GOVERNMENT'

The pacification of Ireland at this moment, as I believe, depends on the concession to Ireland of the right to govern itself in the matter of its purely domestic business. What is the alternative? Are you content, after eighty years of failure, to renew once more dreary experiences of repressive legislation? Is it not discreditable to us, that even now it is only by unconstitutional means that we are able to secure peace and order in one portion of Her Majesty's dominions? I don't believe that the great majority of Englishmen can have the slightest conception of the system under which this free nation attempts to rule a sister country. It is a system founded on the bayonets of 30,000 soldiers, encamped permanently as in a hostile country. It is a system as completely centralised and bureaucratic as that by which Russia governs Poland, or that which was known in Venice under the Austrian rule. An Irishman at this moment cannot move a step, he cannot lift a finger, in any parochial, municipal, or educational work without being confronted, interfered with and controlled by an English official appointed by a foreign Government—and without a shade or shadow of representative authority. I say the time has come to reform altogether the absurd and irritating anachronism which is known as Dublin Castle, to sweep away altogether these alien boards and foreign officials, and to substitute for them a genuine Irish administration for purely Irish business. (Islington, June 17, 1885).

BURDEN OF EMPIRE

It is not necessary that I should waste time in repudiating the idea of annexation, of a Protectorate, or even of an indefinite supervision of the Egyptian Government. Such a policy as this would be contrary to the truest interests of this country. The time has gone by when Lord Beaconsfield could truly declare that the policy of the English Government embraced the extension of the empire. We think our possessions are sufficiently ample, our duties and responsibilities too onerous and complicated. We think that to govern well and wisely the people who already own our sway, is a task for the most magnificent

ambition and most exalted patriotism. If we were tempted by the present opportunity, by visions of advantage to ourselves, or even by the hope of material benefit to the Egyptian people, to add this additional load to the heavy burden of empire we already bear, we, or our descendants, would surely rue the day when, without regard to the experience of the past, and in spite of the difficulties which we have faced in governing one race by another, we created a new Ireland for ourselves in the East. (Ashton-under Lyne, December 19, 1882).

MR. GLADSTONE

The Tories have two alternative views which they take of Mr. Gladstone's character. Sometimes they say that he is a tyrannical dictator, trampling down all opposition and dragging at his heels a reluctant party through devious and dangerous paths; and then again they say that he is a man pressed on from behind—a mere puppet and tool in the hands of designing politicians of the Radical stamp who lead him he knows not whither. It is quite clear that both these accounts cannot be true at the same time; and it does not require much perspicuity to declare that both are false. So far from Mr. Gladstone being a tyrant, I say there is no man in the House of Commons—I don't believe there is any man in the country—who is so ready to receive suggestions, so anxious to appreciate the case of an opponent, so willing to give consideration to any new light which can be thrown upon a subject. He is only too generous and considerate to his opponents. It is, however, perhaps this open-mindedness which is in itself one of the secrets of his success; and when you add to that his unequalled ability, his marvellous and unparalleled eloquence, his extensive knowledge of men and things, and the vast experience which fifty years of honoured and honourable public life have given him, who can wonder that the affection and devotion of his fellow-countrymen centres on the Prime Minister who stands a head and shoulders above all his competitors—the noblest figure in English political history. (Ashton-under-Lyne, December 19, 1882).

When the history of the last five years comes to be written, you know whose will be the central and the prominent figure. You know that Mr. Gladstone will stand out before posterity as the greatest man of this time—remarkable not only for his extraordinary eloquence, for his great ability, for his steadfastness of purpose, for his constructive skill, but more, perhaps, than all these, for his personal character, and for the high tone that he has introduced into our political and public life. I sometimes think that great men are like great mountains, and that we don't appreciate their magnitude while we are still close to them.¹ You have to go to a distance to see which peak it is that towers

¹ At the Cobden Club dinner on July 1, 1883, referring to Cobden, Mr. Chamberlain said, ‘I suppose that it is impossible to estimate a great man, as it is impossible to estimate the true character of a landscape till you are at a distance from it. The real proportions of a mountain and its relations to its surroundings, are not seen by a spectator at the base and it is not till you are somewhat removed from its neighbourhood that its true mass and its real structure are fully disclosed.’

above its fellows ; and it may be that we shall have to put between us and Mr. Gladstone a space of time before we shall know how much greater he has been than any of his competitors for fame and power. I am certain that justice will be done to him in the future, and I am not less certain that there will be a signal condemnation of the men who, moved by motives of party spite, in their eagerness for office, have not hesitated to load with insult and indignity the greatest statesman of our time—who have not allowed even his age, which should have commanded their reverence, or his experience, which entitled him to their respect, or his high personal character or his long services to his Queen and to his country, to shield him from the vulgar affronts and the lying accusations of which he has nightly been made the subject in the House of Commons. He, with his great magnanimity, can afford to forget and to forgive these things. Those whom he has served so long it behoves to remember them, to resent them and to punish them. (Birmingham, June 3, 1885).

WHO TOIL NOT, NEITHER DO THEY SPIN

Lord Salisbury cares nothing for the bulk of the Irish nation. He calls for vengeance upon the criminals who have been guilty of outrage and violence ; and so far I am with him. But then he stops there. He has no sympathy—at least he expresses none—for the great mass of the population, whether of loyal Ulster or the three other provinces of Ireland, who have been subjected to undeniable tyranny and oppression and whose wrongs cry aloud for redress. He can express to you in eloquent terms his sympathy for the Irish landlords who had to submit to a reduction of 25 per cent. in their rents, but I find nowhere any expression of sympathy for poor tenants who for years, under the threat of eviction and the pressure of starvation, have paid those unjust rents, levied on their own improvements and extorted from their desperate toil and hopeless poverty. I say that in this matter, as in so many others, Lord Salisbury constitutes himself the spokesman of a class—of the class to which he himself belongs, ' who toil not, neither do they spin,' whose fortunes, as in his case, have originated by grants made in times long gone by, for the services which courtiers render kings, and which have since grown and increased while they slept, by levying an unearned share on all that other men have done by toil and labour to add to the general wealth and prosperity of the country of which they form a part. (Birmingham, March 30, 1883).

UNFAIR CONDUCT OF CONSERVATIVES

(Replying to Mr. Gibson who said the Conservatives on taking office were entitled to fair play from their opponents). . . . Is it fair play, in the midst of international complications of a dangerous and complicated character, to endeavour by every means to discredit and weaken the hands of the men who, in the name of the country, are

carrying on momentous negotiations? Is it fair play to harass them with questions, and to examine and cross-examine them at a time when the public interests demand a prudent reserve, and when the issues of peace and war may be affected by even an involuntary indiscretion? Is it fair play to refuse the supplies which Ministers of the Crown on their responsibility ask of the patriotism of the House of Commons in a time of grave emergency? Is it fair play to denounce a Kilmainham Treaty, which never existed, as a compact with rebels and assassins, and then to bargain again and again with these self-same rebels for the support by which the Government may be overthrown? Is it fair play, at a time when the pressure and urgency of public business demands the whole attention of the House of Commons, to connive tacitly at obstructive proceedings, and even occasionally actively to participate in them? Lastly, is it fair play to meet with contumely and unmannerly interruptions the Prime Minister of the empire in the discharge of his high functions: to ignore the decencies of debate and to lower the dignity of the House of Commons in order to embarrass the statesman who, with a load of years upon his head and with the almost intolerable burdens of empire upon his shoulders, has been called upon again and again to bear the brunt of personal malignity and of studied disrespect? Yet these are the tactics which we have been taught during the last five years to associate with the conduct of what called itself a patriotic Opposition. (Holloway, June 17, 1885).

TORY COMPACT WITH PARNELLITES

In pursuance of a compact they had made with the Parnellite party—in pursuance of this bargain, for which they were called upon to pay a price—their leaders got up in the House of Commons the other day and separated themselves ostentatiously from Lord Spencer, and any approval of his administration. I say even by this one act the Tories have done more to lessen the authority of the law in Ireland than all the Radicals have said and done during the past five years, we might almost say that all the Nationalist members ever have said or done, because the effect of the Tory action has been to show that the maintenance of law and order is not a matter of principle, is not a matter of conviction, is not a matter even of State policy, but is a matter of the meanest party interest and party consideration.

The consistency of our public life, the honour of political controversy, the patriotism of statesmen which should be set above all party considerations—these are the things which in the last few weeks have been profaned and trampled in the mire by this crowd of hungry office-seekers, who are now doing Radical work in the uniform of Tory Ministers. After a speech of mine the other night, a member of the House of Commons came up and said, ‘My dear fellow, pray be careful what you say, for if you were to speak disrespectfully of the Ten Commandments, I believe Balfour would bring in a bill to-morrow to repeal them.’ (Hackney, July 24, 1885).

DISESTABLISHMENT

I am an English Nonconformist—bred and born in Dissent—and I am opposed, from honest conviction, to anything in the nature of State interference with, or State aid to, religion.

It seems to me that the underlying principle of all Church Establishments is, that it is the duty of the State to support some form of religion. I think it follows from that that it must also be the duty of the State to take the responsibility of deciding what is the true form of religion ; because I cannot conceive of anything more flagrantly immoral than that the secular authority should deliberately foster error. Now, such assumptions as these have been held in past times to justify religious persecution, because if it be the duty of the State to encourage truth, it is a perfectly consistent argument to say that it is also its duty to discourage error. Opinions have been changed, sometimes, no doubt, by bribes and inducements to their adoption, but quite as frequently by pains and penalties against their rejection. Assumptions of this kind lighted the fires of Smithfield, and drove the Puritans from England and the Huguenots from France. Such views harried the Vaudois on their Alps and persecuted your Scottish Covenanters on the mountains, where they sought to worship God according to their consciences. Even now in these milder times it is the same pretence which justifies sectarian bigotry and disqualifications imposed on any form of religious belief. I say that to my mind it is impossible to reconcile these things with the cardinal principles of our common Liberalism. If a man has a right to think out for himself his religious faith, to hold it, and to teach it, he ought not to be either bribed or persecuted in order to relinquish it. The State oversteps its proper field of duty, and trespasses on religious equality and religious freedom, when it singles out any form of religious belief for its care, or any religious organization for its special patronage, and I would say, in addition to these considerations, that I think religion itself has always suffered by its connexion with the State, and that no Church has ever existed in this position which has not lost something of its independence and its freedom when it became a department of the State. But there are other practical considerations which cannot be, I think, put out of view ; for exclusive ecclesiastic position tends directly to exclusive political faith, and I think you will find that Established Churches in all history have, by virtue of their establishment, been alienated more or less from the national sentiment and the national sympathy. I know that in England, at all events, history shows that the vast mass of our clergy have always resisted every attempt to extend the limits of freedom—every social and every political reform. On the other hand, the ministers of the dissenting sects have been their warmest and their heartiest advocates. You cannot find the cause of this in the men. Human nature is the same whether it be in the Establishment or outside it. You must find it in the system, which has a narrowing effect, and which tends to alienate all its supporters from the national move-

ment. You must look to the same cause for the existence of sectarian bigotry, which, unfortunately, is too common.

I say, then, that for political as well as for social reasons, and in the interest of religion itself, I am a Liberationist. I would free the Church from State control, whether in England, in Scotland, or in Wales ; and my opinion on the subject is undoubtedly strengthened by my belief that the appropriation to the service of a single sect of funds which were originally designed for the benefit of the whole nation is an injustice. (Glasgow, September 15, 1885.)

DISSENT

It is true that as Dissenters you are still somewhat handicapped in the race, and that there is one religious sect which enjoys the patronage of the State, and which is in possession of endowments and of privileges which are denied to other sects. But I am not certain that these, privileges and endowments are unmixed advantages, and I have always held that the Church of England would gain if she abandoned them, if she rested upon voluntary support, and if she did without the assistance and the control of the State. . . .

Dissent has played a great part in the history of this country, and none of us have cause to be ashamed of the name of Dissenters. We owe our ideas of political freedom, of civil and religious liberty—we owe our hatred of everything in the nature of arbitrary power—we owe these, and not only we but the kindred nations, the number of nations which own this as their mother country, to the efforts and to the doctrines preached by those Puritan ancestors who loved freedom here, who fought for freedom and suffered for it, and who carried their love for it to the far countries across the water, where they laid the foundations of new empires and of a great republic. (New Methodist Connexion School in Birmingham, September 4, 1889.)

DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION

I should be the last to deny or depreciate the enormous sacrifices which have been made by many of the clergy to establish and maintain schools. But I say that on their own confession their motive has been, not the education of the people as a thing which is good in itself, but the maintenance of the doctrines of the Church of England. I say that, even if they had been a great deal more successful than they have really been, it is the worst kind of Conservatism to say that because a thing is good of its kind it shall not be supplanted by something which is better and more complete.

If denominational education is to be extended in England, how can you in justice refuse denominational education in Ireland (i.e., Roman Catholic education) ? And then you will have this glorious anomaly in our splendid constitutional system : you will have the State spending money on mutually destructive objects, and the patient people will be called upon in one breath to swallow the poison and the antidote, and to pay the bill for both !’ (National Educational League, 1868.)

The representatives of the ratepayer must have absolute control of all national funds applied to secular education ; all grants for this purpose made to denominational bodies must be withdrawn ; religious teaching should be relegated to religious bodies, each at its own time and in its own buildings. (January 24, 1872.)

RADICAL PROGRAMMES

The complete establishment of religious equality, the freedom of education in our national schools, the improvement of the dwellings of the poor, the improvement of the condition of the agricultural labourers, the popular control of the liquor traffic, and such a readjustment of taxation as will proportion its burdens to the means and ability of the taxpayer—these are questions upon which I believe the great majority of the people are agreed, but whose solution is of necessity delayed till all the people are taken into counsel. (Bristol, November 26, 1883.)

Local government is the first item in the Liberal programme. Closely after it there comes such a question as the reform of the land laws, of greater importance, I believe, to the towns than it is to the country. There is also the question of revision of taxation. There is the question of the control of the liquor traffic. And then there are the questions of the State Church, of free schools, of the abolition of the game laws, of the greater security of life at sea, and many others which are now coming into the front rank of practical politics, and with which statesmen will shortly be called upon to deal. We cannot trust the solution of these questions to the forced consent of the Tory party, to be refused as long as possible, to be conceded with reluctance, to be granted only when further resistance has become dangerous and impossible. (Hackney, July 24, 1885.)

RANSOM

How to promote the greater happiness of the masses of the people—how to increase their enjoyment of life—that is the problem of the future. And just as there are politicians who would occupy all the world and leave nothing for the ambition of anybody else, so we have their counterpart at home in the men who, having already annexed everything that is worth having, expect everybody else to be content with the crumbs that fall from their table. Now, if you will go back to the origin of things, you will find that when our social arrangements first began to shape themselves every man was born into the world with natural rights—with the right to a share in the great inheritance of the community, with the right to a part of the land of his birth. Well, but all these rights have passed away. The common rights of ownership have disappeared. Some of them have been sold ; some of them have been given away by people who had no right to dispose of them, some of them have been lost through apathy and ignorance, some have been stolen by fraud, and some have been acquired by violence. Private

ownership has taken the place of these communal rights, and this system has become so interwoven with our habits and usages—it has been so sanctioned by law and protected by custom that it might be very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to reverse it. But then, I ask, what ransom will property pay for the security which it enjoys? What substitute will it find for the natural rights which have ceased to be recognized? Society is banded together in order to protect itself against the instincts of men who would make very short work of private ownership if they were left alone. That is all very well, but I maintain that society owes to these men something more than mere toleration in return for the restrictions which it places upon their liberty of action. I think in the future we shall hear a great deal about the obligations of property, and we shall not hear quite so much about its rights. What are the rights of property? (Birmingham, January 5, 1885.)

RIGHTS OF PROPERTY

I ask you whether it is not time that we should submit to a careful examination and review a system which makes of the possession of land not a trust, but a means of extortion and exaction. Let us look this fetish in the face. Let us examine these sacred rights of property. Let us see upon what they are founded and let us see whether there ought not to be some limitation to the exorbitant pretensions with which they have been accompanied. . . . Squalid homes, unhealthy dwellings, overcrowding: these are the causes—the fruitful causes—of the crime and immorality of great cities. They are the direct result of a system which postpones the good of the community to the interest of individuals, which loses sight altogether of the obligations of property in a servile adulation of its rights. Sometimes it is the comfort and health of the people that suffers; sometimes it is their prosperity that is destroyed. (Inverness, September 18, 1885.)

PAYMENT OF MEMBERS

At the present time I will undertake to say that in the great majority of the new constituencies the working classes will themselves be in a majority and they will have the power to return one of their own order if they should find a fitting candidate. But the real difficulty lies in this—that you cannot find subsistence for men of the working classes if they are summoned to the House of Commons, and the only way of overcoming that difficulty is to adopt the old constitutional system of payment of members. You pay the Ministers of the Crown, and I cannot understand why members of Parliament should be the only people who ought to be expected to work for nothing. . . . It is said sometimes, ‘Oh, but you will introduce the professional politician into England.’ Well, why not? The argument does not appear to me to be conclusive. Doctors, lawyers, manufacturers, working men, all have to learn their trade, and I should like to know why politics is the only business which may be left to

amateurs. I should like to know why the great interests of the State should be committed to men who undertake to deal with them as a distraction and as a distinction, and who do not make it the serious business of their lives. (Birmingham, January 29, 1885.)

EXCESS OF IMPORTS

The excess of imports over exports causes much anxiety to a certain class of persons in this country, and is regarded by them as a sign of weakness and a proof of our commercial decline. I consider it, on the contrary, as a fact which ought to give us the greatest satisfaction. . . . What does this enormous balance represent? In the first instance, it represents the cost of freight—the carrying trade of the world, and especially of English goods, having passed almost entirely into English hands. But over and above this item it represents nothing more nor less than the profit derived by this country from its external trade and the interest from its investments abroad, during these forty years. (House of Commons, August 12, 1881.)

I have seen it stated that in Birmingham there exists a profitable industry in the manufacture of idols for South African negroes, and another industry for the manufacture of guns warranted to burst the first time they are fired. Generally speaking, I observe that everything which is said about Birmingham is inaccurate, and I disclaim any belief in these stories; but suppose, for the sake of argument, that this charge against the morality of my fellow-townsmen could be substantiated, and that a Birmingham manufacturer sells a brass deity to the negroes, or a gun such as those which were disposed of by the late Government to the number of 200,000, at the rate of 2s. 6d. apiece; then, if for either of these commodities the Birmingham trader received an ounce of gold, as he well might, in return, the transaction would appear in the statistical tables as an export of 2s. 6d., and an import of about £3. The balance of trade would be £2 17s. 6d. against the Birmingham tradesman, and yet I do not think he would have any cause to be dissatisfied with the pecuniary results of the transaction. But why should what is profitable in the case of the individual become unprofitable when multiplied by the thousand or the million in the case of the nation? And yet this is the contention of gentlemen who fume and fret whenever the value of what we receive is greater than the value of what we give. (House of Commons, August 12, 1881.)

COBDENISM

In judging Mr. Cobden we have to consider, not whether the world has been wise enough to adopt his views, but whether anything has occurred since his death which has weakened the force of the argument which he used, or which has thrown the slightest doubt upon the conclusions at which he arrived. I think, tried by these tests, Free Trade will successfully stand the experiment. It is quite true that

the organized interests by which Protection is supported have been in many instances too strong for its assailants. In the United States the condition of the country, the extraordinary development of its internal trade, the marvellous opportunities which have been offered by its vast expanse of unoccupied territory, have favoured the advocates of Protection. On the Continent of Europe, Governments committed to an excessive military expenditure have naturally enough lent their aid to tariffs which conceded, while they increased the burdens of, taxation. But the argument against this system by which the few are enabled to enrich themselves at the expense of the many, remains absolutely unshaken, and I do not doubt that in the long run truth and reason will prevail. (Cobden Club, June 30, 1883.)

DUTIES UPON FOOD

Is any one bold enough to propose that we should put duties upon food? I can conceive it just possible, although it is very improbable, that under the sting of great suffering, and deceived by misrepresentations, the working classes might be willing to try strange remedies and might be foolish enough to submit for a time to a proposal to tax the food of the country, but one thing I am certain of: If this course is ever taken, and if the depression were to continue, or to recur, it would be the signal for a state of things more dangerous and more disastrous than anything which has been seen in this country since the repeal of the Corn Laws. With the growth of intelligence on the part of the working classes, and with the knowledge they now possess of their own power, the reaction against such a policy would be attended by consequences so serious that I do not like to contemplate them. A tax on food would mean a decline in wages. It would certainly involve a reduction in their productive value; the same amount of money would have a smaller purchasing power. It would mean more than this, for it would raise the price of every article produced in the United Kingdom, and it would indubitably bring about the loss of that gigantic export trade which the industry and energy of the country, working under conditions of absolute freedom, has been able to create. (House of Commons, August 12, 1881.)

‘INTENTION’ OF CORN DUTY

The House has learnt from Mr. Ecroyd that the question whether a man is a Protectionist or not depends entirely upon his motive at the time. It is not a question of fact, but it is a question of intention; and if a man comes to this House and proposes to levy a 5s. duty on corn to protect the farmer he would be a Protectionist; but if another man comes down and proposes to lay the same duty on foreign corn, and says in the words of the hon. member, that he did it ‘quietly and peacefully, in order to determine the flow of capital and labour by driving industry to the colonies,’ and although the same results may follow, although the action is similar and the conditions are identical,

in the one case it is to be called Protection, while in the other the name of Protection is to be indignantly repudiated. That seems to be a question beyond ordinary comprehension. It is a problem in casuistry rather than a question of practical politics. (House of Commons, March 24, 1882.)

EFFECT OF PROTECTION

The gist of the message which Lord Salisbury has to convey to the people of Wales and through them to the people of this country is that if they will return him to power he will promise them a vigorous foreign policy, and a feeble imitation of Protection in the guise of what is called Fair Trade. That seems to me to be a rather small programme for a great party. . . . As to the prospect of any return to Protection in any shape or form, I think it is inconceivable that the agricultural interest would allow manufactures to be protected, while food imports went free, and I think it is equally improbable that the working classes of this country will ever again submit to the sufferings and to the miseries which were inflicted upon them by the Corn Laws in order to keep up the rents of the landlords. If that is the programme of the Tory party we have only, in answer to it, to recall the history of those times when Protection starved the poor, and when the country was brought by it to the brink of revolution. Remember the description which was given in the Corn Law Rhymer of the sufferings endured by the people, and of the burning indignation which these sufferings called forth. That is not a retrospect which I think would be favourable to any party or any statesman who should have the audacity to propose that we should go back to those evil times. (Eighty Club, April 28, 1885.)

TENDENCY OF PROTECTION

It is a very curious thing that Protection has a tendency to enlarge its demand. It is like the quack medicine, whose failure is always attributed to the insufficiency of the dose. If you study history at all you will find the condition of the farmer was never so hopeless, the state of the labourer was never so abject, as when corn was kept to a high value by a prohibitive or protective duty. The goods of the people were taxed to raise the rents of the landlords, and none of the plunder found its way into the farmer's pockets. (Ipswich, January 14, 1885.)

FREE TRADE

I will only put before you two reasons why I differ from those who desire to abandon Free Trade. My first reason is this—that in times past in this country when England was under Protection, and in foreign countries to-day which are also under Protection, notably in the United States and in France, trade is even worse than it is now and here. My second reason is a little more complicated. We are, after all, a very

small country that plays a very large part in the history of the world, and owing to the fact that we are a small country we cannot be self-sufficing ; we cannot maintain by ourselves, by our own efforts alone, the vast population that is crowded within the limits of our territory. We depend upon our foreign trade. But if by any means—by Protection or any other—you shut the door upon foreign goods, you may be quite certain that the result will be that there will be less English goods that will go abroad. All foreign trade is a matter of exchange.

I know there are some people who are led astray by the insufficient study of Board of Trade statistics. They say that the amount of our exports is less in money value than the amount of our imports, and they say the balance of trade is against us and the country is being drained of its gold. This is an entire mistake. If that were true, if the balance between the amount of our exports and the amount of our imports were paid in gold, there would not be a single sovereign in this country, and there would not have been for the last thirty years. But, on the contrary, the stock of gold has increased within the present generation, and the real fact is that every pennyworth of foreign goods that comes into this country is paid for by a similar amount of English goods that go out of the country—either, that is to say, English goods as directly represented by the figures of the Board of Trade, or English work in the shape, for instance, of freight and shipping transport ; and in that way, therefore, whatever foreign countries may do in their endeavour to close their markets to our trade, as long as they send goods here they are obliged to take our goods in return. (Birmingham, March 30, 1895.)¹

¹ It will be seen from the date of this speech that Mr. Chamberlain retained his Free Trade convictions long after his separation from the Liberal party.

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